A DISCOURSE OF THE Government OF THE THOUGHTS.

By *GEORGE TULLIE*, Sub-Dean of *York*.

The Third Edition Corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for Ric. Chiſwell, at the *Roſe* and *Crown* in St. *Paul's Church-yard*. MDCXCIX.

1699

Imprimatur,

Aug. 17. 1693.

Geor. Royse *R^mo. in Christo Patri ac Dom. Dom.* Johanni *Archiep. Cantuar. à sacris Domest.*

TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God

JOHN

By Divine Providence

SHARP

Lord Arch-Bishop of *York*, His Grace, Primate of *England* and Metropolitan.

May it please your Grace,

THAT I take the liberty to Prefix so Great a Name to so small a Treatise; onely the Dig-

nity of the Subject indeed makes some Compensation for the defects and meanness of the Present: For the Argument is Truly Great and Noble in it self, and what would deserve a much abler Pen, more leisure for Abstractions, a more Philosophical Genius, and both a wider Compass, and a closer Collection of Thought, than any I can pretend to. Thus much however may be said,

That

That a Sense of that Edification, which ought always to be the Chief Aim and Design of the Pulpit, which first gave Birth to this Discourse, oblig'd me to write as familiarly and practically as the Subject would well admit of. Such as it is, My Lord, my Relation to the Church of York, *the just Esteem one has for the Concurrence of so many excellent Qualifications in one Person, and*

my particular Obligations to Your Grace, make this publick Acknowledgment of them a Just Debt from,

My Lord,

Your Graces Most Dutiful and Obliged Servant,

GEORGE TULLIE.

The PREFACE.

THO I have no great Opinion of Prefaces, to ſmall Tracts eſpecially, that ſeem not to require any Prolegomena, and ſo conſequently deſign'd none; yet ſince the Printing This off, I find my ſelf under a ſort of Obligation to ſay ſomething that way; having been inform'd by ſome Friends, that there was a Treatiſe lately Publiſh'd (which has ſince come to my Hands) with the ſame Title I deſign'd for mine, and with a great Name annexed to it; and that both the Book, and the Vanity (as they thought it) of the Title-Page paſs'd for mine with thoſe that did not know me. From which Imputation the publiſhing of this will, I hope ſufficiently clear me.

As to the Tract it ſelf, I ſhall make no other Reflection on it, than that it were to be wiſh'd, that That Excellent Perſon, whoſe Name the Author is pleas'd to make uſe of, had carried on his Meditations from The Government of the Tongue, to the Springs and Wheels of

of all its Motions, those Thoughts *that set it a going; for then we might have expected a just Discourse indeed upon the Argument.*

I have little more to add, but that I am sensible the Subject I have here undertaken might be manag'd after a much different manner from what it is by me; and that without running out either into the wide Field of Logick or the Passions; which are distinct Arguments, both in themselves, and from what I here intended.

A Man who can turn his Eyes vigorously inward, and read the hidden and mysterious part of himself; might no doubt, make several Reflections thereupon, not unworthy the Observation of the thinking World: As, that in our most abstracted Researches after Truth, our Notices of Things are fetch'd more from extrinsick and accidental hints, than a just and regular *Inquiry; and a Man often* falls upon *a lucky Thought as casually as* Printing *and* Gun-powder *were invented: That if the motion of our Thoughts in composing,* &c. *like that of the Sun, be both quick and bright too, that yet something of* Earth, *as the Objects of Sense, a*

fume

fume or vapour in the Head often interpoſes betwixt us and the Sun-ſhine *we enjoy'd, and* Eclipſes *the expected Diſcovery: That ſometimes a ſudden* Flaſh *of Thought breaks in upon us, but either ſo faintly bright, that it but juſt* gilds *our Underſtanding, and then flies off, or ſo plentifully, that it* dazzles *and over-powers our Faculties, that we cannot retain it; as Meats of too high a Taſte are not eaſily digeſted by a weak Stomack: That if our Thoughts run* turbid *and* lutulent, *as the* dregs *and* ſediments *of Mortality will often make them do, that then they riſe not up to the heighth of their Subject; if quick and nimble, that they ſeldom prove ſolid and weighty, as the ſame Stream is rarely rapid and deep too: That the Poſition of a Chain of Thoughts may be eaſilier Banter'd than Confuted, and that their Succeſſion is by no means ſo fortuitous a thing as unobſerving Men are apt to apprehend it. He might ſhew particularly, and at large, how the Prejudices of Education, Intereſt, Paſſion, &c. pervert the Sentence of the Underſtanding, when it ſits upon its Object; that hence principally derive thoſe different*

ferent Sentiments of Things and Persons, that so much Imbroil the World; and that were it not for these Bribes that Corrupt our Thoughts, all Mankind would think *alike here; as 'tis certain they will do in each different State hereafter: Since Truth in every thing is still the same, and like its Great Author, can be but One, a streight Line that admits of none but it self betwixt the same individual Points, and that 'tis therefore in a considerable measure the* Obliquity *of Mens Wills and Affections that hinder their Thoughts from running* parallel *with it and one another.*

Thus a Man by observing the Working *of his Thoughts upon all Occasions, whether of Speculation or Practice, might furnish the World with such Remarks as would carry both Pleasure and Profit in them, and let us more and more into the knowledge of the* terra incognita *of our own lesser World, shew us both* how we Think, *and how we might improve the mighty Talent. And herein the* Genius *of* Aristotle *was admirably great: He read himself, and therein all Mankind, in their true Light and proper Colours;*

for

for one Man, ſtript to his Reaſon and the due uſe of his Faculties, is but the counter-part of another. His Logick was the pure reſult of his own Obſervations upon the working of his Thoughts and the proceeds of his Reaſon: For Logick does not teach us to Argue, Nature did that before it, but reduces our arguings into Rules and Methods, and ſhews us how *we do it.*

Theſe Reflections I have only briefly and haſtily huddled together, that if they chance to fall in *with any happy and obſerving Genius; they may ſet it on work, and be the fortunate occaſion of more perfect and conſummate Productions in this kind; and then I ſhould think this lame and imperfect Eſſay infinitely better beſtow'd than otherwiſe 'tis like to be: For I am ſo ſenſible of its Imperfections, that I could heartily wiſh it in my Hands again. But 'tis now out of my own power, and ſo I muſt be content to lie at the mercy of the Reader for venturing with ſo ſmall a force of Thought on ſo great and noble an Argument: For he that writes on Thoughts, writes on the Pride and Perfection of Humane Nature,*

ture, on that which must yield us in a great measure the Satisfactions or Torments of the other Life; Thoughts excusing *or* accusing *their Owners. He writes on that which is an unanswerable Proof of a divine, spiritual, and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us: For I defie all the Advocates of Deism or Atheism it self, to conceive Matter, howsoever thinn'd or modified, capable of thinking: For no Man, I am sure, if he rightly consults his own Principle of Thought, can possibly reconcile himself to this Apprehension, That Matter, pure Matter, can Think, Meditate, Deliberate, Reflect, be Witty, Argue, Infer, pursue long Chains of Consequences, and impart to Man that Vivacity and Sprightfulness of Spirit, and the Vastness of Genius, that displays it self in him.*

In a word, If any one is made wiser, *but especially* better *by what is here offer'd, I have my End.*

THE

THE Government OF THE THOUGHTS.

CHAP. I.

HE that designs to write of Thoughts, had need tell the World, in the first place what he means by the Subject of his Discourse; for this is a vast Argument in the general, as wide as the Exercise and Dominion of all the Powers and Faculties of the Soul, and had need therefore be determin'd to some particular Kind or Species of its Operations; for there's no sayling

to any Profit or Pleaſure in ſo wide an Ocean, without knowing firſt whither you are bound, and what determinate Port you ſteer for.

I. THEN by Thoughts we do not underſtand thoſe Motions that paſs in the lower Region of the Soul, the Paſſions or Affections that are excited in the Will or in the ſenſitive Appetite, as ſome love to ſpeak; theſe may indeed be touched upon now and then, by the by, but no otherwiſe. For beſides, that it is not my Deſign here to Write a Book of Ethicks, as the Argument, conſidered in that latitude, would oblige me to do; the Paſſions or Affections are not Thoughts, in Propriety of Speech, but the Effects or Products of them: Thoughts are the Parents, Paſſions the Off-ſpring; for by thinking, reflecting, and the brooding of the upper

upper Powers of our Souls, our Paſſions are form'd and brought forth in us; as the muſing on an agreeable Object, that we apprehend as preſent, raiſes in us Joy; on one that is yet in Expectation, Hope and Deſire; as, on the contrary, the Thoughts of an Object that is diſagreeable, creates in us Fear, Anger, or Sorrow, according as we conceive it preſent, or in futurity. Nor

II. DO I intend to ſpeak here of all the ſeveral Operations that are tranſacted in the upper Region of the Soul, the Underſtanding, as of its ſimple Perceptions, forming of Propoſitions, diſcuſſive and retaining or recollecting Power; the Government of the Thoughts, in this acceptation of the Word, would oblige me, to direct how to form true, and diſcover falſe

Reasonings, which is the Province of the Logicians, and would oblige me to run out into those jejune and dry Speculations, that are improper for a Practical Design.

I mean then by Thoughts here, neither the Passions, nor yet the reasoning, deliberating, and arguing Faculty of the Mind, but that Power chiefly, whereby we first of all gaze at, contemplate, muse upon, and converse with those Images of things, which our Senses for the most part originally represent to our Fancies, and our Fancies from them, paint forth in our Minds. Any Man who gives himself the liberty to think, and can make his Understanding the Object of its own Contemplations, is conscious to himself of the primary Interviews of his Mind with the Objects let into it, and must own them

ante-

antecedent to, and consequently distinct from, both his Passions and Reasonings about them; for a Man must first think, or look upon and view the Ideas in his Mind, before he can be any ways affected with, or argue or deliberate about them; as a Man, for Instance, must first think upon a formidable Object, before he fears it, or reasons with himself how to escape the Danger, that threatens him.

NOR can it possibly, in the Third place, be expected that I should treat of Thoughts in this limited acceptation of them, according to the vast variety of Objects, that are their subject-matter; for these were an Argument, in the Language of the Book of *Job*, * *As high as Heaven, what canst thou do?*

* *Chap.* 11. *ver.* 8, 9.

deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea. Nor God, nor the whole frame and œconomy of Nature terminate the Horizon, or bound the ramble and excursion of our Thoughts, which extend themselves even to *things that are not*, that have no other Being but what they borrow from a confus'd Imagination: For our Fancies, by a tumultuary compounding of Ideas, instead of real, can create fictitious Objects for their entertainment, and divert themselves as well with a Chimera of their own Manufacture, as with the most real and substantial Being.

IT will be sufficient therefore, and indeed all that can well be perform'd on this Argument, to draw the great and general Lines of several of those excentrick Motions incident

cident to our Thoughts, and to endeavour to prescribe the Regulation of them.

BUT to recommend a Design of this nature to the Minds of Men with better success, it will be requisite, in the first place, to premise some of those many Obligations that lie upon us to govern our Thoughts as well as our exterior Words and Actions.

Sect. 2.

AND first, we are obliged to this Government of Thoughts, because we may transgress the Divine Law by them, as well as by the transactions of the outward Man. 'Twas a fundamental Flaw in the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and indeed of the generality of the whole Jewish Nation, that they

thought an External Obedience to the Law, which exempted them from all Temporal Penalties due to the Violation of it, ſufficient to denominate them Righteous, without any regard had to the Innocency of their Hearts and Affections. 'Tis no ſtrange thing indeed, that the Heathens generally, who were left to diſcover the Divine Nature with the naked Eye of their own Faculties, ſhould content themſelves with ſuch an external Righteouſneſs, or Obedience as this, which reached the outward Man onely; but it is a very ſurprizing Conſideration, that the Jews themſelves ſhould take up with it, who knew their Law to have been Enacted by a God, that is a Searcher of Hearts, who requires the ſervice of the Spirit, and will be Lov'd and Obey'd with all the Powers and Faculties of the Mind. But yet thus

it

it was with that ſlow and carnal People: They had very little Concern upon them for the obſervance of the Precepts, that related to the Regulating the Motions of the inward Man; for there being no Penalties expreſly annexed to them, they looked on them as * *Advice* rather than *Precept*, or at worſt, that the Guilt, contracted by their mental Sins, was ſo done away by their Sacrifices, that God would remember them no more. They underſtood little or nothing beyond the Political Covenant, the Terms whereof chiefly influenc'd their Obedience, and ſo took up with ſuch a political Righteouſneſs, as conſiſted in the Obedience of the Civil Laws of the Jewiſh Commonweal: Hence it is, that *Trypho* the Jew, diſputing with

* *Grot.* in *Matth.* 25.

Justin Martyr, says, That the Gospel Precepts, meaning those that Command the Obedience of the Heart and Affections, seem'd to him incapable of Observance; and that *Josephus* reprehends *Polybius* the Historian, for ascribing the Death of *Antiochus* to Sacrilege intended, though not committed by him, τὸ γὰρ μηδέτι ποιῆσαι τὸ ἔργον βουλόμενον, οὐκ ἦν τιμωρίας ἄξιον, 'For 'as long, *saith he*, as he did not 'actually execute his Intentions, he 'deserv'd no Punishment: And that this was the old received Notion of Obedience, appears plainly enough from our Saviour's correcting this Misprision, in the 5*th.* of St. *Mat.* *Ye have heard*, saith he, *ver.* 21. *that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill:* If a Man did not actually Murder another, he was thought to have kept within the Bounds of the Eighth Command-

ment,

ment, as indeed he did, as to the Temporal Penalty annex'd to the Violation of it, which was then principally regarded; but our Lord tells them plainly, *ver.* 22. That the Guilt in this particular, lies as deep as the very Beginnings, the first Efforts and Sallies of an angry Mind towards a foolish Quarrel that may end in Blood; in which Sense St. *John* affirms, that *whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer*, is already so, tho' his Sword be still unsheath'd, and he has stabb'd him only *in Effigie*. Again, says he, to the same purpose, at the 27*th*. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit Adultery*, if a Man did but refrain from the actual Embraces of a forbidden Bed, how keenly soever he debauch'd by the strength of an impure Imagination, yet he was, for all that, in their Notion of Obedi-

Obedience, a Chaſt and Modeſt Man ſtill; but our Saviour tells them a Rape may be committed in the Fancy, and Adultery by a wanton Glance. And that the Jewiſh Notion of Obedience, is not yet altogether antiquated under Chriſtianity, ſeems but too evident from that trite proverbial Saying amongſt us; that *Thoughts are free*; as if when Men durſt not let looſe their Hands, or their Tongues, to work Wickedneſs, yet they might give their Deſires and Imaginations their full ſwing; and muſe, and wiſh, and contrive, and pleaſe themſelves with the Invention and Images of thoſe things which they think it not ſafe to put in execution; whereas, on the contrary, the Laws of our Lord preſcribe to our Affections, ſet bounds to our Fancies, regulate our Deſires, direct our Intentions, govern our Wiſhes, ſtrike

at

at Sin in the *Embryo*, and check the first voluntary motions and tendencies of the Mind to Evil. Voluntary, I say, because 'tis hard to imagine, that those *motus primo primi*, as the Schools speak, those first stirrings of Concupiscence which come not within the verge and compass of the Will, should fall under the lash and censure of the Law; a Souldier is not punished for having an Enemy to encounter, but for not doing his Duty to repel his assaults, if, instead of watching and repressing his Motions, he rather entertains him, then, but not till then, let the Law go upon him. God will certainly punish no Man for an Imperfection that is not in his Power to prevent, and which he did not himself voluntarily Contract, will not call us to an Account for being proper Subjects of the Operations of his

his Grace; but for mis-using it, and will not require it at any Man's Hand's that he has the *Seeds* of Evil scatter'd in his Composition; but for suffering them to *fructify* in the soil. However, it must still be own'd, That as to all the irregular Motions of the inner Man, that fall under the disposal of our Wills, God has concluded them all under Sin, that, by *the wicked Man's forsaking his thoughts*, the numberless vain Thoughts that fly up and down his Mind; he might the *more abundantly pardon*, Isa. 55. v. 7. accordingly the same Prophet tells us of those that * *err in spirit*, *Solomon* of those that err in imagining evil, *Prov.* 14. 22. and *Micah* denounces woe to † *the Devisers of Iniquity.* Hence the same Wise King of *Israel* tells us in one

* Isa. 29. 24. † 21.

place,

place, that [a] *the thought of foolishness is sin*; in another place, that [b] *they err who devise evil*; in a third, that [c] *the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*; as his Father *David* had before observ'd of some, that [d] *their inward parts were very wickedness*, and tells us of others, that [e] *in their heart work wickedness*. Hence again it is that St. *Peter* requires [f] *Simon Magus to repent of the thoughts of his heart* (for what is the Subject of our Repentance but our Sins) that St. *Paul* requires us to [g] *bring into Captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, which supposes, that of themselves they are naturally Rebellious; that our Saviour reprehends the Pharisees for [h] *thinking Evil*, and affirms of [i] *Evil Thoughts*,

[a] *Prov.* 24. 9. [b] *Prov.* 14. 22. [c] *Prov.* 15. 26. [d] *Psal.* 5. 9. [e] *Psal.* 58. 2. [f] *Acts* 8. 22. [g] 2 *Cor.* 10. 4. [h] *Matt.* 9. 4. *Matt.* 15. 18, 19. [i] *Matt.* 5.

that

that *they defile the Man*, as well as when they ſhoot forth into exterior Actions of Murder, Adultery, *&c.* The very intention and deſire whereof he elſewhere equals with overt Tranſgreſſions of the kind. The Reaſon of all is, That God being the Father of the Spirits of all fleſh, and the Kingdom of his Son a Spiritual Kingdom too, 'tis congruous both to the Divine Nature, and ours, which is a ſtrickture of his, that his Laws bear ſway in our Spiritual part, in our Hearts and Souls, our Wills and Affections; For would we have an Infinitely Glorious Spirit, ſerv'd by dull Fleſh and Blood only, and not rather like himſelf, in Spirit and in Truth, with thoſe prime Productions, thoſe firſt born Sons of the Immortal Nature in us? Has God made us Men, and would we Pay him but the ſpiritleſs Homage

of

of the Animal part of us? Has he implanted a noble and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us, and shall it not share in our Obedience to him, and consequently in the Guilt of the Transgression of his Laws? He is the Natural Lord of both Soul and Body, has bought them with a Price, and therefore all the Reason in the World the Obedience we Pay him should be commensurate to the extent of his Purchase; so that if we have any just abhorrence of Sin in the true Latitude of the Divine construction of it, we must govern our Thoughts, as well as observe measures in our Words and Actions.

Sect. 3.

BUT I shall farther evince the obligations that lie upon us to order our Thoughts aright, from

from such considerations as seem to enhance the guilt of mental Sins above those of the outward Man. For

I. THO' it be an argument that Sin has acquired an arbitrary power over us, and that the Law in our Members has got the ascendant over the Law of our Minds, when the seeds of evil Thoughts shoot forth into criminal Words and Actions, and in this respect the Off-spring is worse than the Parent, that is, 'tis worse to speak and do Evil than barely to think it; yet consider the outward acts of Sin separately and apart by themselves, abstracted from those previous cogitations that give them Birth, and then the Sins of the Mind are infinitely more criminal; for is it not worse to prostitute an immortal Soul to sin and folly than

a

a mouldring Carcaſe? The one is in the nature of an Artificer that models and contrives the Sin, the other but as the inſtrument as it were in its Hand; and who reckons the murdering Sword as faulty as he that dar'd to ſheath it in his Brother? The one is as the Mother of the ſpurious Brat, or the Womb wherein Luſt firſt conceives, till the Heart grow big and the reckoning of the Sin be out; the other only comes and Midwives it into the World, and brings forth that which *brings forth Death*; and who ever thought theſe two equally criminal? Nay, ſet aſide the Guilt that derives from the corruption of the Mind, and why ſhould the worſt actions of the outward Man be reputed any more ſinful than thoſe of the Horſe and the Mule that have no Underſtanding? For Sin is properly in the

Soul

Soul only; the proper subject both of it, and of that Grace which corrects it.

II. OUR Thoughts are always *first in the Transgression*, and so in respect of precedency, are more inexcusable than outward actions; they are Ring-leaders in the Rebellion of Sin against God, and Persons of that Character are generally made as exemplary in their Punishment, as they are for their Crime; these are the first begotten of their Father the Devil, the eldest Sons of Original corruption, *the might and the beginning of the strength* of Sin in us. *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders*, &c. There the Son of violence first lays his scene of Blood, the Extortioner of Oppression, the Adulterer of the forbidden Bed, and so of the rest; for a Man first

devises

deviſes Miſchief, in the Pſalmiſt's language, and then *puts himſelf in a way that is not good, and abhorreth not evil*: Nay they are not only thus the Devil's puny Counſel, that open the Cauſe and make a Motion in behalf of Sin, but they are perpetually ſolliciting, abetting and pleading its Cauſe at the Bar of a debauch'd Fancy and a bribed Underſtanding, where many times they unhappily carry it; for 'tis no wonder that a corrupt Judge ſhould give it on their ſide. Thus do our Thoughts cater and *make Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfill the Luſts thereof*, bring and recommend the beloved Object to the Heart, till it dotes and commits actual Folly with it; thus they lay in fuel for our Sins, and not only enkindle, but blow up the Fire into open flaming Wickedneſs; and therefore:

III.

III. SINS of Thought are more criminal than outward Transgressions, in as much as the Guilt of the one derives from the other; for all thoughts are Errors, as it were, of the first concoction, which affect Nature in all her subsequent operations of Life. Thoughts are as the Principal, outward acts but as Accessories. The one is in the nature of the Cause, the other of the Effect; for *out of the abundance of the Heart does both the Mouth speak* and the Hands act, and *out of it*, says the Wise Man, *are the Issues of Life*, and I add, of Death too. And who can blame the Streams for their necessary partaking of the Pollutions of their Fountain? Thoughts then are the *Principle* of Spiritual Life, or Spiritual Death in us, that great leading Wheel within the Engine, which

which as when it moves regularly, it causes the outward *Hand* of our Words and Actions to *Point* right, so when 'tis out of course, it puts all in the like disorder with it; for our Actions will be of a piece with our Thoughts and no one acts like a Wise Man, who thinks like a Fool. *O Generation of Vipers*, says our Lord to the Pharisees, *how can ye, being Evil, think good Things?* For, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* Who can bring good Words or Deeds out of foolish, wandring, and unhallow'd Thoughts? For, *how shall a Man reap there where he has not sow'd?* Can he from Weeds reap Grain, *gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles?*

IV. IF we govern not our Thoughts, they will govern us, to speak more properly, will leave us

us without any true government of our ſelves, they are natural movers that need no winding up, but are inceſſant in their motion towards Good or Evil, and therefore if we take not care to determine them to proper Objects, they will run out upon any that come in their way, will haunt and dog us to the Table, to the Bed, to the Cloſet, to the Church, will be perpetually intruding, interpoſing, and interrupting us in our Duty, will either intercept all good Motions, or diſtract and confuſe us in the performance of them, and to be ſure, will be moſt buſie and impertinent at the time of our Religious Services, when we are to compoſe our Souls to the ſevereſt ſobriety and intenſeneſs of Meditation.

V. THE peculiar malignity of

evil

evil Thoughts is farther visible in this, that they render the outward act of Sin more or less criminal, according as they have been more or less active in the contrivance of it: For every previous reasoning, premeditation, and debate, enhances its Guilt, and inflames its Punishment, as that which argues a more studied and deliberate contempt of the Supreme Legislator, and therefore it was that the Murder of *Uriah* was more charged upon *David* than his Adultery with *Bathsheba*. He took a great deal of Thought about the one, but in the other Thoughts took him.

VI. SINS of Thought have this particular Aggravation above outward Breaches of the Law, That they are committed upon less Temptation than these; and the weaker the Temptation, the more pow-

erful is the ſtrength of Sin in us. The two great leading Paſſions of the Soul that determine us to, or deter us from, outward Acts, are our Hopes, or our Fears, which carry many times ſo fatal and ſo ſtrong a Byas with them, that they incline us to Evil, even contrary to the Checks and Reluctancies of our own Minds.

ILL Times may ſcare Men into thoſe Actual Complyances, which left to themſelves, they abhor; and the impending Danger, which, as it bore a mighty ſtroke in the commiſſion of the Sin; ſo, tho' it cannot juſtifie it, yet will it make ſome abatement of its Guilt: But Thoughts are, in this Senſe free; free, from all external Compulſion, nor Priſons can confine them, nor Fire nor Sword force them into a Complyance: So that if they join

in

in the Act, they are perfect Voluntiers in the ſervice: And as our Thoughts are thus above the reach of Fear, ſo of Favour too; above the Love of Friends, or the Reverence of great Men, or the expectation of Rewards; for who can pay a Man for that which no Man knows, but the Spirit of a Man which is in him: How ſhall outward Hopes influence the inward Tranſactions of one's own Breaſt onely? External Acts of Sin, indeed, may have ſomething to ſay for themſelves, becauſe they may chance to carry their Wages, ſuch as it is, along with them; but he who plays the Knave, the Adulterer, the Murderer, *&c.* in his own Heart, he has nothing in exchange for his Soul, but Sins for pure ſinning ſake, as it were, without any proſpect of ever being conſider'd for his Pains, without any other

Wages than the old ſtanding one of Death.

VII. AND Laſtly, thoſe Sins which have a more immediate Relation to the Mind and Spirit, as Pride, Envy, Ambition, Malice, Unfaithfulneſs, Uncharitableneſs, *&c.* which are tranſacted moſtly in the inner Man; as they are more Incorrigible, ſo conſequently more Criminal, than others. For as to thoſe Vices which in a high meaſure depend upon the Tempers and Conſtitutions of our Bodies, want of fuel will in time dead their flame: When the Spirits flag, the Blood chills, and the Pulſe beats low, *and the Evil Days come on wherein we have no pleaſure in them*; the decays of Nature ſet the Soul then at ſome tolerable ſort of liberty to Reflect upon her own Condition; but as to the other, Age generally ſerves only

only to confirm and eſtabliſh us in them. For how rarely do we ſee a Covetous Wretch let go his hold of the Earth, tho' he is dropping into it? How ſeldom are Envy and Malice exchang'd for Contentment and good Nature? And when ſee we the Proud Ambitious Man reduced to the ſame level of Mind, with his humble Neighbours? Sins of this kind have too much of the *Ethiopian's* Skin, and the *Leopard's* Spots, eaſily to admit the Laver of Regeneration. Accordingly we find the Angels *who kept not their firſt ſtation, reſerved in everlaſting Chains under darkneſs to the Judgment of the great Day*, for Sins of this incorrigible kind. For ſuppoſe their Sin Pride and Ambition, Malice or Envy, or what you will; 'twas certainly tranſacted in the Mind, without the intervention of Corporeal Efficiency, and deriv'd it's peculiar

Venom from the ſpirituality of its Nature. Mental Sins then were the firſt, and are ſtill, conſidered in themſelves, the moſt crying Provocations.

SECT. 4.

Other Reaſons why we ſhould govern our Thoughts.

BESIDES what has been hitherto alledg'd on this behalf, the Conſideration of God's All-ſeeing Eye ought alſo to influence the Conduct of our Thoughts: They lie not indeed within the walk of Humane Juſtice, are without the ken of Humane Inſpection, no Eye can pry into the receſſes of the Heart; but God ſees, and knows, and reads their ſubtileſt Motions and darkeſt Intrigues, with greater perſpicacity than we do Mens outward Words and Actions: *For lo there*

there is not a Thought, not the motion of the least Fibre in our Hearts, *but he knoweth it altogether, knoweth it afar off*, at the distance of Eternity it self, e'er we or our Thoughts had any other Being than in the Divine Idea. * *For no Thought can be with-holden from him.* † *Hell and Destruction are before him, how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men?* And then how strongly are we obliged to keep good Order there, since they are under the Eye of so Intimate and Accurate an Observer of their internal Motions, and subject to the inspection of so true a Judge of good Discipline, and so severe an Avenger of bad? But I shall urge this Consideration farther in its proper Place, as a means to assist us in the ordering of our Thoughts aright. And therefore,

* *Job* 42. 2. † *Prov.* 15. 12.

II. IN Order to this End, it would be conſidered; That God bears a ſpecial regard to the Obedience of our Hearts and Affections: For tho' bright and ſhining Examples of Vertue diffuſe a Luſtre round about them, promote the Divine Honour, and induce Men to glorifie the great Father of ſuch burning Lights which is in Heaven; yet nothing is ſo unexceptionable a Demonſtration of the Power of Grace, and the Sincerity of our Hearts, as a conſcientious Care and Management of thoſe Thoughts that fly up and down in them: For where ſuch an Obedience is yielded to the Divine Commands as no Eye can pry into, but that which is ten thouſand times brighter than the Sun in its Zenith; it cannot poſſibly admit of the leaſt intermixture, or ſuſpicion of By-reſpects; but muſt be tender'd God purely for his own

Sake,

Sake, from a true Spiritual Principle of Life, and in a Spiritual Manner: And then what Sacrifice can possibly be more acceptable to our Maker, than the immediate Issues and Emanations of our Souls, when there is no Stander by, no Witness of what passes betwixt God and our Souls in private, no secular Consideration that can possibly ingage us, nor temporal Rewards to induce us, nor temporal Punishments to force us to the Discharge of so Spiritual and hidden a Duty?

III. 'TIS a main Point of Wisdom and Argument of good Understanding, to be able to order our Thoughts aright, and the acquisition of that noble Character should spur us on to this Discipline of our Minds: All the Reasonable World will allow him to be a Person of a vast compass of Understanding, who

by fore-seeing and providing against the Exigencies of State, by knowing how to compound, temper, and qualifie the different Interests, Passions, and Perswasions of Men, *&c.* prudently Administers a Government: And if so, no less will he deserve the Character, who governs his Thoughts well; for they are a great People for number, and as mutinous and disorderly as the most tumultuous Rabble; so that they *who Rule well*, in this Sense too, *are worthy of double Honour.*

IV. AND Lastly, Let the Consideration of the Noble and Dignified Nature of our Thoughts induce us to an orderly Management of them: For they are Beams of that Light which is Inaccessible, the immediate Fruits and eldest Sons of that Immortal Parent in us, which is nearly allied to the Divinity it self:

ſelf: And how then can we poſſibly be ſo inſenſible of our own high Character, who were framed after the Image of the Immortal God, and are deſigned to be made more ample partakers of his Nature; as to lay out our Time and Pains ſo buſily as we do, in the Management of a Family, Acquiring an Eſtate, and ſupporting or adorning a mouldering Carcaſe, and yet totally diſregard the Menage of our Thoughts, which are the Pride and Glory of our Nature? For wherein elſe, but in this Thinking, Reaſoning Power, do we differ from the Inhabitants of our Stable, or our Kennel? And as this in general diſcriminates our Nature from theirs; ſo, I had almoſt ſaid, does one Man as much differ from, and excel another, by how much he is the better Maſter of his Thoughts, and can lay them out to more generous purpoſes: If there-

fore

fore we have any just Sense of the Dignity of our Humane Nature, and would Advance and Improve that Part of us which is properly the Man, we must manage those Thoughts by which we manage all things else.

CHAP. II. SECT. I.

HAVING thus endeavour'd to lay before Men the Obligations they are under to order their Thoughts aright, I shall in the next Place point out several of those Infirmities, Irregularities, and Defects, that are incident thereto, whereby it will more particularly appear, how vain and frivolous, and sinful they are. The multiplicity of Objects, and the great variety of those Motions whereby the Mind entertains her self with them, renders

renders it next to impossible to take in this Argument in such a Latitude, as to be able to descend to Minute Particulars: I shall therefore content my self to instance in some more general Defects and Weaknesses of the Thinking Power in us; leaving it to every Man, who expects a more exact Draught of them, to attend to the Motions of his own Mind, and to follow the Jant of his Thoughts after those Objects that keep them most company.

I. ALL Thoughts of our Hearts are undoubtedly vain, that are employed about Criminal Objects, as the Gratification of any of our Lusts, *&c.* For the sinfulness of the Object imparts its Guilt to the Act of the Mind that is conversant about it; no Man can think of accomplishing a Revenge, a Fraud, a Murder, *&c.* and be innocent.

Nam-

Namque ſcelus in ſe tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet.

is the Voice of both *Pagan* and *Chriſtian* Theology. St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 14. requires us not to *make Proviſion*, as we render it, *for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof*, μὴ προνοίαν ποιεῖσθαι, ſays the Original, *i. e.* not to contrive or project before-hand how to accompliſh our wicked Intentions: For our Thoughts always lay the Plot, before it thickens into the laſt Scene of Actual Execution; but this Head is ſo plain, that I need not longer inſiſt upon it.

II. THOSE Thoughts muſt needs be very vain and fooliſh, whoſe Subject-matter is vain and trifling: 'Tis not every one's Portion to have their Minds fraught with ſolid and ſubſtantial Lading; ſome carry

carry nothing but Ballaſt, dull heavy Conceptions; others carry too great a Sail, are over-light and airy; others Trade only in Toys, in News, Fancies, Faſhions, Apes and Peacock-feathers; neither Nature nor Education has furniſhed all Men with proper Materials, for their Thoughts to Work upon: And therefore, ſince the common Activity of their Minds will not ſuffer them to be wholly idle; what wonder if they take up with unmanly Arguments, and converſe in their Thoughts with their Dogs or their Horſes, with the Paſſages of the Theatre, the imaginary Exploits of ſome Hero in Romance, or the like; Thinking to no purpoſe rather than not Think at all.

III. AS ſuch Thoughts as theſe are *materially* vain, becauſe their Objects are nothing worth; ſo other

ther Thoughts may be ſaid to be *formally* ſo, *i. e.* when tho' the *matter* of them is good, yet the *manner* and *turn* of the Heart in thinking of them is not as it ſhould be. Thus, the ſame numerical Prayer may be a ſweet ſmelling Savour from one Man's Mouth, and an Abomination from anothers; where, though the Matter of the Service is one and the ſame, yet the different *turn of* Heart and Mind makes it, *formally* conſidered, a quite different Performance. So, again, a wicked Man may think of the ſame God, with a good one; where though the Matter of his Thoughts be equally good with the others, yet his Thoughts are vain, becauſe without Spiritual Life and Vigor in them; whilſt, by reaſon of ſuch Qualifications, the others are accepted; and 'tis very poſſible for a wicked Man to have a Thouſand

mate-

materially good Thoughts, and yet go to Hell in the midst of them: He may think of God, and yet never have the more Service of him; he may think of Repentance, and yet continue the same Impenitent Man he was; he may think of Death and Judgment, and yet his Life be never the better. 'Tis hard if in such a vast Lottery of Thoughts, as is Played at in our Minds, a very wicked Man have not now and then a good Chance; and yet if he is not renewed in the Spirit of his Mind, and both the Principle and Course of his Actions better'd by them; they are none of his own Thoughts, but Injections properly, with which his Soul is haunted; and such thinking of good Things will be so far from abating a Man's Guilt, that they will enhance his Punishment. In fine, as every Thought of Sin is not sinful (for a Man may think

think of it with Abhorrence) so neither does every Thought of Piety and Religion come under the Character it pretends to. For where the Heart is carnal and vain, it defecrates every good Motion thrown into it from without, and like a vitiated Stomack, instead of affording solid Nutriment to the Soul; turns all it meets with into the morbifick Matter of Sin.

IV. 'TIS a great Vanity of our Thinking Power, to leave the plain beaten Road of profitable and substantial Knowledge, for the narrow crooked Paths of nice and useless Speculations. The Word and Works of the Almighty, together with the Operations of our own Minds, the Wonders of the greater and lesser World, afford more solid Stuff for our Thoughts to Work upon; than the widest Capacity was ever able to go

go through with; and yet such is the natural Activity of our Minds, and the fruitless Curiosity of some Men's, that they choose to *refine* upon them, commonly beyond Usefulness, often beyond Sense, affect *Sciences falsly so called*, and Spin Cob-web-Notions out of their own Brains, fit only to catch Flies with. Thus has the insipid Nicety of the Schools mangled, and even *crucified* the Word of God, putting on it a Crown of Thorns too, the barbarous Spinosities of their own Inventions; and made the plain intelligible Doctrine of Believing in God, and living well, a Torture and Rack to the Brains of the Learned, and Consciences of the Ignorant. They have thinn'd the Doctrine of Jesus into the Fineness and Air of the Metaphysicks of *Aristotle*, and made their Schools as great an *Asylum* for *the Disputers of this World*,

as

as their Churches are for the Murderer, or other Malefactor. And how ſhould Men gather Grapes of ſuch Thorns, and Figs of ſuch Thiſtles as theſe? Such Brambles of Diſpute may tear and rent one's Mind in paſſing through them, but can never edifie it.

V. 'TIS another vain Thought to imagine we can bring about our Projects, without having God in our Thoughts, or by contrary means to what he has Appointed: Thus the *Jews*, as God complains by *Jeremy* in the beginning of his Prophecy, had *forgotten him days without number*, and were always Projecting with themſelves, without taking him into the Conſult, by what means they might ſtave off or elude the Captivity threatned them; in neglect of that only means of ſincere Repentance he preſcrib'd them;

them: Upon which account it is, that he requires *Jeruſalem, to waſh her Heart from wickedneſs, that ſhe might be ſaved, and* asks * *how long her vain Thoughts ſhall lodge within her?* They not only feign'd to themſelves, that *Jeruſalem* the City Royal of the Almighty Monarch of the World, was impregnable; that the Temple of the Lord there was a ſufficient Sanctuary to them, againſt all their Enemies; and that it was impoſſible for *Abraham*'s Seed to be in Bondage, to any Power upon Earth (in all which vain Imaginations they were confirmed by the falſe Prophets that abounded moſt when the State was moſt corrupt) but that if they were at any time Attack'd by the *Chaldeans*, they would ſtrengthen themſelves in the ſtrength of *Pharoah*, by entring into a Confederacy with *Egypt*; tho' God had denounc'd ſeveral Woes

* *Jerem.* 4. 14.

long

long before against that Project. And how common a thing it is for Men to leave the Mighty Counsellor out of the Cabinet, to trust in an Arm of Flesh, and pursue the Maze and Labyrinth of their own Devices, in accomplishing the Designs they have upon the Anvil; we need no other, and can have no better Argument to convince us, than our own Experience of the wicked Projects this Day set on foot by the grand Incendiary of *Europe*. There is no Subject doubtless, whereon our Thoughts are more busily imployed, than in framing and contriving those Designs we have under the Sun; and yet, which proves the extreme Vanity of 'em, for the most part to little or no purpose. For, *Man's goings are of the Lord*, how much soever he thinks them of himself. And how then, as the Wise King

asks

asks the Question, *can a Man understand his own ways?* We project, devise, propose Ends, prosecute, apply Means; and yet all the while are managed, acted, and, as often as the Divine Wisdom pleases, over-ruled and defeated by an Invisible Hand behind the Curtain; for * *I know, O Lord,* says the Prophet, *Jeremy, that the way of Man is not in himself, 'tis not in Man that walketh to direct his own steps.* And in *Isaiah* he has particularly declared Wo to them who † *take Counsel but not of Him, who ask, but not at his Mouth:* The Practice of the Statesmen amongst his own People in the Case before mention'd; and for which Reason, as he there threatens, he afterwards made the Strength of *Pharoah* (wherein they trusted) ‖ *their Shame, and their*

* *Jer.* 10. 23. † *Isa.* 30. 1, 2. ‖ *V.* 3.

trust

truſt in the Shadow of Egypt *their Confuſion.* For in the excellent Language of the Apoſtle upon this Argument: **The Wiſdom of this World is fooliſhneſs with God: For it is written, he taketh the Wiſe in their own Craftineſs. And again, the Lord knoweth the Thoughts of the Wiſe that they are vain.*

VI. THERE is another Vanity of Thought, which our Lord himſelf takes ſuch expreſs Notice of, and that in his Excellent Sermon on the Mount, that it muſt not here be diſregarded by us: And that is an intemperate Sollicitude and Anxiety of Thought, for the things of this preſent Life; the Vanity whereof he evinces with a force of Argument, and ſtrain of Words, like himſelf, truly Divine, and which will therefore abundantly

* 1 *Cor.* 3. 19, 20.

ſuper-

ſuperſede any further Illuſtration of the matter: For, Firſt, he argues *a majori ad minus.* [a] *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment? i. e.* Will not he, think you, who firſt kindled in you the vital Flame, furniſh you with Fuel to keep it in? Will not he who gave you a Body, give you a Covering to it? Then Secondly, he reaſons from Inſtances of God's Providence to Creatures of a Nature far inferiour to Man, [b] from his *feeding the Fowls of the Air, and his Clothing the Lillies of the Field.* Thirdly, he ſhews the Vanity of this Anxiety of Thought, from its Inſignificancy and Ineptitude to the attainment of what we propoſe to our ſelves from it: For, [d] *which of you,* ſays he, *by taking thought can add one Cubit to his Stature*; or as

[a] *Matt.* 6. 23. [b] *V.* 26. [c] *V.* 28. [d] *V.* 27.

others Expound the Place, can with all his Anxiety, add the leaſt proportion to his Age, or extend the Period of his Life. And then as he adds, in St. *Luke*'s Relation of the Paſſage, *If you are not able to do that thing which is leaſt, why take ye Thought for the reſt?* If ye are not ſufficient of your ſelves to preſerve your Lives till to Morrow, why ſo infinitely buſie to make Proviſion for them? Fourthly, he tells them plainly, That for his Followers to lay out their Thoughts ſo immoderately about the Affairs of this Life, is to be ſtill upon the ſame level with a Gentile Spirit; * *For after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek, beſides that your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all theſe things:* And he is not ſo unnatural a Parent, as to let his Children

* *Ver.* 32.

go

go destitute of the necessary Accommodations of Humane Life. Thus has our Lord himself, in an ample and extraordinary manner, expos'd the Vanity of this misimployment of our Thoughts to our Hands, and we shall have occasion to insist farther on the Argument hereafter.

VII. THERE is a certain Dulness or Stupidity incident to the Thinking Power, when the Mind does not go, but, like a Clock with the Plummets off, stands still, is heavy and dumpish, and has no distinct Conceptions of any Object let into it, but nodds and falls asleep, as it were, and runs into another World, as Men in Dreams do. And this, I conceive, is generally occasion'd, where it is not owing to a Natural Defect, either by Guilt within, or Troubles and

Dangers from without. First, Guilt within, is always apt to confuse our Reasonings, choak and break in upon our Apprehensions of Things, and strangle our Thoughts: It always lies cross and heavy in our Mind, and deads that Chearfulness and Alacrity of Thinking that Innocence Naturally gives it. And then, Secondly, for Dangers and Disasters, they fix the Mind upon the Contemplation of the Object that frights or disquiets it, render a Man's Spirit dead, as it were, within him, congeal his Powers, make them stiff and destitute of Motion; so that a Man has not for that time the Command of his Reason, to look about and provide fit Means to escape the Danger that threatens him.

VIII. 'TIS another Miscarriage in the Management of our Thoughts, when

when we propose no one good and fixed End of Life, for the supreme Object of our Pursuit. Some have working Imaginations, never idle, always stickling, but as good never a whit as never the better, as the Phrase is. For it is not enough for a Man to have this or that particular End in his View, as Opportunity presents, and his Occasions require: But he must have a further and fairer Mark, at which he Aims and Directs them all: A Man may make this or that Harbour, as Occasion serves in his Voyage; but sure every Motion he makes is in Subserviency to gain some one determinate Port of Traffick: For otherwise, as the one Sails uncertainly, and to very little purpose; so the other Thinks and Lives but from Hand to Mouth, as we say; by Breaks and by Parcels, without any Dependance and Coherence in

Thought or Action: He purſues no one Road of Life, but takes into every By-path, and his Thoughts, like a wanton Spaniel in its Range, run after every accidental Game that comes in their way.

Eſt aliquid quò tendis, & in quod dirigis arcum?
An paſſim ſequeris corvos teſtâque lutoque,
Securus quò pes ferat, atque ex tempore vivis?

IX. ANOTHER ſinful Weakneſs of our Thoughts is ſeen in their being ſo much at the Command of our Paſſions; as if you obſerve it, they generally are: For tho' Thoughts are originally antecedent to our Paſſions, as a Man muſt firſt think before he can be affected with Joy, Grief, Anger, &c. yet when theſe Paſſions are

once up, they Command the Thoughts that made them, and imploy them wholly on those Objects that raise and affect them: So that look what Affections bear the Sway in a Man's Heart, that way his Thoughts will take their Course: As for instance, tho' a Man must first Think before he can be Angry, yet when that Passion is once up; it lays out for that time all the Thoughts of an unsanctified Heart upon the Injury, Affront or Injustice done one, and the Means whereby we may effectually resent and revenge it. So again, when Love and Desire have taken Possession of us, be the Object what it will, our Minds are always musing on it: *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire*, says *Jeremy*, the things they love and delight in? No, our Thoughts are always present with their be-

loved Object, run after it, and into it, and represent it to us with far more Advantages than it really carries along with it. And the like might be said of any other of our Affections: They discompose our Minds, confuse our Souls, and, like a too powerful Enemy breaking in upon us, put the numerous Army of our Thoughts into disorder; so that when the Heat of the Battel is over, a Man looks back upon the Defeat with Sorrow and Regret; and is at a vast expence of Trouble to rally up his scatter'd good Thoughts again, and to put them once more in a posture of Defence against those intestine Disturbers of his Quiet. Now, I say, this is a signal Weakness in our Thoughts, to be thus carried away by our Passions, at their will and pleasure; for our thinking Power was given us amongst other Ends, to regulate and

prescribe

prescribe to our Passions, and not our Passions to them.

BUT since they were given us for good Ends and Purposes, and we are not required to Eradicate, but to Govern them; therefore the Apostle's Rule is the proper Remedy in this Case, *viz.* That we set *our Affections on things above, not upon things that are upon the Earth.* For our Thoughts will partake of the Qualities and Genius of our Affections: If the one are Heavenly and Divine, the other will of course be so too. *David*, speaking of the Blessed Man, tells us, *Psal.* 1. *ver.* 2. *That his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and then adds, that *in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night*: And in another Place, professing of himself, that *he loved the Divine Law*, he affirms likewise, That it was *his Medi-*

tation * *continually.* For Men naturally Meditate on what they Love and Delight in: And in *Malachy*, the † *Fear of God*, and *thinking* upon his Name, are join'd together.

X. THERE is another sinful Vanity of our Thoughts, in making the Concerns of other Men their Objects; when they make Incursions into their Neighbour's Affairs, break down his Inclosures, and impertinently ramble thro' all his Concernments: For such is the Curiosity, Malice, or Envy, or I know not well what to call it, of some Persons; that they can entertain their Thoughts (as they do their Company too upon occasion) much more agreeably with other Men's Matters than their own, and

* *Psal.* 119. 97. † *Malach.* 3. 16.

even

even whilſt they keep at Home, incur the Guilt of their Character, whom St. *Paul* ſtyles *Buſie Bodies*, *Tatlers*, (wandring in their Thoughts) *from Houſe to Houſe*: The Practice of thoſe generally, who, in their own Phraſe, have nothing to do, as wanting Matter, I conceive, in themſelves for their Thoughts to feed and exert upon.

NOW This Employment of our Thoughts is not only ſilly, and impertinent to any good purpoſe of Life, but 'tis criminal too; inaſmuch as every Man, let him have as little Secular Buſineſs as he will, yet has Work enough upon his Hands, the Improvement of his Mind, the Government of his Paſſions, and the Salvation of his Soul, to take up all his Thoughts, all his Time and Leiſure: And therefore it muſt needs be a Sin in a Man, in neglect of his own proper Buſineſs,

to

to let the precious Sand of his Thoughts run out upon other Mens, where they are not call'd, and have nothing to do.

AND as it is a Vanity of our Thoughts to gad so much abroad amongst our Neighbour's Affairs, where they have no business; so are they no less vain in this, That when they stay at Home and turn their Eyes inward, they are apt to over-look the Failings and Imperfections of their Owners. Every Man has his *Fort* and his *Foible*, his strong and his weak Part, his seeing and his blind Side: And whilst the Eyes of our Minds view the one, even the least *Mote* of Excellency in us, with infinite Complacency and Satisfaction; they commonly wink so hard at the other, that they let *Beams* themselves escape their Observation. For every one that

doth

* *doth evil hateth the Light* of his own Mind, *neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reproved*: For Self-Love is ever ready to take Care that a Man fall not out with himself.

X *Lastly*, ANOTHER leading Imperfection of our Thoughts, is observable in their Levity or want of Fixation; whereby we become *as unstable as Water, and shall not excell*: *The Heart of the Foolish is like a Cart-Wheel*, says the wise Son of *Sirach*, *and his Thoughts are like a rolling Axle-Tree*: Glib and voluble in their Motions, nothing so volatile and airy as they: They stream and shoot in an instant from one Corner of the Earth to another, soar as high as Heaven, and dive as deep as Hell, curvet and caper

* *Mat.* 7. 8.

over

over the whole Creation, and as if that were too little for them, fly beyond the limits of the Universe, and the bounds of Time, to Eternity and Imaginary Spaces. Like wanton Spaniels they set out with you, and perhaps wait on you Home again, but Range every Field, and pursue every Game that comes in the interim in their way; or like some restless Birds, they no sooner light upon one Object, than they presently take Wing and fly off to another: By which means there happens many times so quick a Succession, or rather indeed, such a tumultuary Jumble of Ideas in our Heads; that we lose our selves as in a Maze, get into a Labyrinth of our own making, and can hardly remember the Goal from which our Thoughts first started: So that if we look'd them over again, and could but trace them in their Rambles

bles and Excursions from one Object to another; we should find them many times no more coherent than our Dreams, or the Rovings and extravagant Apprehensions of Mad-men: And perhaps the main difference betwixt the Mad-man in Bedlam, and the other musing in his Study, lies in this, That the one is so foolish at to utter his Conceptions as they throng into his Head, and the other so wise as to conceal them.

NOW there may be several causes of this Imperfection: If we will trace it up to its Spring-head, we must go as far back as the Fall of *Adam* for it; when the Mind leaving the pursuit of the Chief and Supreme Good, about which it regularly mov'd, as about its proper Center, and proposing to its self the acquest of infinite other false and ficti-

fictitious Goods in its stead; it became, like a wandring Star, planetary and erratic in its Motions.

AGAIN, we may find another Cause of this in our own Composition; we are all fearfully and wonderfully made up of Two very difficult Parts, Soul and Body, and yet so, that the Operations of the Soul do in a great measure depend upon the Temperament of the Body: Now the great Instruments in our Rational as well as Animal Operations, are those subtil Parts of the Blood call'd Spirits, which in the very Constitution of some Persons, those especially of a Sanguine Complexion, being of a fine and light Contexture; do necessarily cause a like Levity of the Mind in Thinking; for we cannot possibly help Apprehending after their Motions and Impressions.

AND

AND as this volatility of Mind is Natural to some Constitutions, so may several Accidents produce it in others, a Blow upon the Head, a Distemper in the Brain, or Intemperance may put the Blood into such a Preternatural ferment, and so agitate and confuse the Spirits; that there will necessarily ensue a like Levity and Confusedness of the Mind in Thinking.

BUT that which carries the most general and principal stroke in this Affair, is certainly the wantonness of our Imagination, which is often presenting our Understandings with fine Pictures and Images of Things, which inveigle our Minds to run a gadding after them, set the Spirits agog, divert the main Stream of our Thoughts from their primary Channel, and let run:

them run out, like Water ſpilt upon the Ground, upon foreign and improper Objects. So that even the moſt Thoughtful Men many times are not able to direct one Line of Thoughts ſtraight on, but loſe ſight of the Subject they at firſt began with. For Imagination is a buſie reſtleſs ſort of Power that's ſeldom or never idle, but moſt of all exerts its Activity, when the Underſtanding is lazy and out of employment. No ſooner does the tempting Object from without, Honour or Pleaſure, or Profit, make its way through the doors of our Senſes to our Underſtanding; but this Faculty, like a Maſter of the Ceremonies, uſhers it in, harangues upon its Excellencies, and deſires it may have Audience: If a Man hankers after Honour, and his Temper is Ambitious; the Imagination preſently lifts him up to one of the

higheſt

higheſt *Pinacles* of the Court, ſhews him *all the Kingdoms* of greatneſs, together with Followers, Dependants, Attendants, Retinue, and the other *Glories of them*, ſo that the Man's Thoughts are always mounting, making Ladders, as it were, to himſelf, and contriving how to climb higher. So again, if an Object of Profit has poſſeſs'd the Mind; the Fancy preſently begins to ſurvey the Land, to ſet off the value and conveniency of Goods laid up for many Years, and falls a telling over the Money, as it were, before your Eyes, to engage you in its purſuit, and makes your *Thoughts*, in the Prophet's Language, *go after your Covetouſneſs*. So again, if the Idea of a pleaſurable Object has ſtolen in at your Eyes, the ſame Faculty preſents you with more Charms than any one elſe can ſee in it, ſum-

mons

mons all the Senſes to bear witneſs to the ſeveral Gratifications it affords them, and recommends the Object ſo long, till your deluded Thoughts play the Adulterer, and commit Folly with it; and in all theſe Caſes, like a flattering Painter, draws the Picture of the Object far more beautiful and exact than ever the Original could pretend too, and by theſe means breaks off the connexion of our Thoughts, cuts them ſhort of the Object they ſhould purſue, and renders them light and deſultory.

NOW this defect, as far as 'tis purely caſual, or as far as 'tis natural, owing to our complex'd Conſtitution of Soul and Body, cannot be criminal; but then comes certainly under that Denomination and is Sin to us, where the natural Infirmity is countenanc'd and indulg'd; eſpecially

cially in Divine Worſhip, or the defect is voluntarily acquired by Intemperance, or the like.

AND now that we are upon this Head, it may not be improper here to ſubjoyn other Vanities of our Thoughts that are principally owing to the ſame cauſe of a wanton and ludicrous imagination: For indeed, this Power carries a mighty ſtroke with us, influencing, in a great meaſure, the Determination of the Judgment, the Choice of the Will, the purſuit of the Affections, and in conſequence of all theſe, the execution of our Bodily Powers.

Sect. 2.

AND here I ſhall firſt take notice of that Error of Thought it occaſions in us, when we apply our ſelves to the Conſideration of ſpiri-

ſpiritual and immaterial Subſtances. For being uſed to think by the intervention of Ideas from our Senſes, which are converſant only about material Objects; the Imagination, which receives theſe impreſſions from our Senſes, is apt to draw the ſame groſs Images of immaterial Beings, as of Spirits, Angels, and of God himſelf: And we being uſed to view the Objects we think of as they are repreſented in the Looking-Glaſs of Fancy; are apt fooliſhly to conclude, that the Originals reſemble thoſe Pictures of them, and ſo make no diſtinction in our Conceptions betwixt material and immaterial Objects: Hence it is, that we conceive Angels to be like young Boys, and the great God like a grave Old man; that very vanity of *imagination*, as the Apoſtle terms it, of which the Gentile World ſtood guilty, in *changing the Glory of the incorruptible*

ble God, into an Image made like corruptible Man, * &c.

II. WE ſhall conſider that vanity which Fancy imparts to our Thoughts, in relation to ſenſual and voluptuous Objects: For hereby Men Frame and Figure to themſelves thoſe unlawful Enjoyments which 'tis not in their power to put in Execution; Courting, and Addreſſing, and Complimenting, and making fine Speeches in their Minds to ſpeculative Idols of their own framing; fond *Ixions* that imbrace the Clouds and Vapours of their own Luſts, *filthy* waking *Dreamers* that defile, not the Fleſh only, but when that's out of imployment, commit Inceſt with the Daughters of their own Imagination; an Argument of great depra-

* *Rom.* 1. 21, 23.

vity

vity of Soul this, for Men to make procurers of their Thoughts, to proſtitute their very Spirits, and put out Conſcience, That *Candle of the Lord*, that all may appear like Night about them, whilſt they commit their Deeds of Darkneſs, their imaginary Rapes, Whoredoms and Debaucheries. We have the voice of Scripture for it, that this *Spiritual Wickedneſs* is Adultery, without any farther progreſs in the Fact. But

III. THERE is yet a worſe vanity of the Thoughts, if poſſible, in relation to the ſame voluptuous Objects, and that is a Repetition of theſe ſinful Pleaſures in the Mind, when they are paſt and gone, and have been really tranſacted. When Men are not ſatisfy'd with the Harveſt they have already reap'd, but muſt have a latter

Math,

Math, as it were, a second Crop of delight in their Thoughts and Imaginations; must renew the filthy Scene in their own Bosoms, erect a Stage there, and their Fancies act over the same brutal Comedies again, with fresh Satisfaction. The Fault this, generally, of over grown and disabled Sinners, dry Trees that have green Leaves, tho' they are past bearing Fruit; Men whose Vices have left them, not through Supernatural Grace, but Natural Infirmity, who lamenting not their Sins, but their Impotence, endeavour, by the strength of an impure Imagination yet living in them, to conjure up the Ghost of their old departed Lusts, to make the dry Bones live, and give their dead Sins a Resurrection from one Grave, whilst they themselves are ready to drop into another.

SO, again, this mental Repetition of ſinful Acts is ſeen in ſeveral other Caſes, as when a Man has over-reach'd and defrauded his Brother in any kind; he is apt inwardly to applaud himſelf for the Villany, to walk over thoſe ſteps again in his Mind, by which he circumvented him, and repeat the diſhoneſty with as much ſatisfaction as he committed it: So Men that are of bitter and implacable Spirits, will act over their Revenge again in their Thoughts, make the Wounds already given their Adverſary, bleed afreſh, in their own Minds, and ſtab him once more in Effigie; and ſo of other Vices.

NOW a Man muſt be arriv'd at a very high meaſure of Impenitency and Impiety, who thus indulges. One would think it were enough for Men to commit the out-

outward Acts of Sin with greediness; but to repeat them with delight again, is to approve of them upon mature Advice, and boldly to declare against all Relentings and Repentance; which ever look with Horror, not with satisfaction, upon our by-past Evil Actions. The great Apostle makes it an Argument of a very wicked Disposition, not only to commit Sin, but to take pleasure likewise in those who do so, and if there be any difference in the Case, 'tis certainly the worse to be pleas'd with own's self for so doing. For every such after-game of internal Complacency is a fresh Commission of the Sin, stains the Soul with a new Guilt, and that so much the deeper, by how much 'tis the more criminal to ingage, not only the Powers of the Body to commit Sin, but the Faculties of the Soul

likewiſe to view and contemplate and repeat it.

IV. ANOTHER Vanity of Thoughts, chargable upon a wild and ungovern'd Imagination, is obſerveable in Men's framing fine Schemes and Images, and ſuppoſitions of things, and then pleaſing themſelves with them, as if they were Realities, and they actually enjoy'd them. For the Fancy has a ſort of power of Creation, and can hold up the images of Idols of its own making, fictitious Honours, Riches, *&c*, till the fooliſh Heart falls down and worſhips them. Thus you ſhall have Men placing themſelves in ſome high Poſt, or eminent Station, or plentiful Fortune; and then amuſing themſelves with Ten thouſand idle Projects, how they would behave themſelves in ſuch Circumſtances; what Figure they

they ſhould make, what Intereſt they would drive on, &c. Cutting out as much work for themſelves, as if they were in the actual poſſeſſions of the Fool's Paradiſe, they have invented. Theſe and the like Imaginations are the frequent entertainment of Melancholy and Hypocondriack Perſons, and perhaps the beſt of Men are apt now and then to fall into theſe ſort of awaking Dreams: Our Minds are apt to ſpread wider than our Conditions, and we will now and then, when our Underſtandings are not better imployed, be Figuring as buſily to our ſelves, what we would do, if inveſted with ſuch an Honour, poſſeſſed of ſuch an Eſtate, &c. as if we were actually Maſters of them. Thus our Fancies project ſhadows, and we take them for Subſtance; we firſt build Caſtles in the Air, and then our Thoughs proudly ſtrut

through every Room of the imaginary Building: We frame an *Idol*, and then fall down and worship it, whilst our *Idol*, in the Apostle's Definition of it, *is nothing*.

NOW this is not only a vanity and a weakness in our Thoughts, but a Sin too. First, because God has provided better Objects for the entertainment of our Thoughts, than such Chimeras. And,

2. BECAUSE that when our Minds thus stroll and stray beyond the Circumstances the Divine Providence has plac'd us in, it argues a sort of Dissatisfaction in us, with our present Condition, which is ever Criminal.

V. AS 'tis a great Vanity of the Mind thus to imploy its Thoughts in imaginary Suppositions, or in draw-

drawing Pictures, as it were, of Things, and then taking them for Realities and Originals: So is it likewise a Weakness and Fondness in the thinking Power, owing likewise to a busie Imagination, to dwell upon, and be ever contemplating a Man's own real Enjoyments whether of Body, Mind, or Fortune. We are certainly our own greatest Flatterers, and should never be impos'd upon by others in this kind, did we not first delude and impose upon our selves. When God has blessed Men with great Abilities of Mind, large Fortunes, or the like; they are always viewing themselves in the flattering Looking-glass of their own Fancies, (like those who spend half their time in Dressing) or many times it proves a Magnifying-Glass, that represents their Enjoyments or Perfections in far larger Dimensions

than what they have in reality. Thus the Men of Parts will be ever and anon amuſing and pleaſing themſelves with their own Notions and productions; whereby as they are apt to over-rate their own Acquiſitions and Abilities, ſo are they inclin'd, to under-value and depreciate thoſe of other Men. For whilſt our Thoughts thus dwell upon our own Perfections, they are apt at the ſame time to ſit in Judgment too upon the ſuppoſed Imperfections of other Men; and thereupon fall immediately upon making Compariſons, and to be ſure bring in the Verdict on their own ſides. Thus, again, in the Caſe of large Revenues, Men like the rich Fool in the Goſpel, are ever and anon taking an imaginary Survey of their Eſtates, an Inventory, as it were, of their Goods; telling them over as Children do their Coun-

Counters, or covetous Men their old Gold; when they ſing the ſoft *Requiem* to their Souls of Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Eaſe, eat, drink and be merry. Thus, again, in caſe of Reputation, for Sanctity of Life; the ſtiff ſupercilious Phariſee pleas'd himſelf mightily, you may conceive, with the Thoughts of his own imaginary Piety, and the Vogue he had amongſt the people upon that account, when his Gravity was pleas'd to thank God that he was not as other Men. Now, I don't think, that 'tis abſolutely ſinful in it ſelf, to view one's own Enjoyments of Fortune, Abilites of Mind, and other good Qualifications, and to give one's ſelf the Advantage; if it fairly appear on one's ſide, upon a juſt Compariſon (tho' great Care in the mean while ought to be had, that the miſtaken Charity of Self-love delude us not,

in covering a multitude of our own Imperfections) For a ſober and temperate Perſon, for inſtance, when he compares himſelf with the Drunkard, or the chaſte Man with the Adulterer, or the knowing educated Man with the Ruſtick, cannot but think themſelves placed as far above the cheap and ſordid Level of the others, as the Cleanneſs and fair Proſpect of the top of the Hill is above the Mire and Dirt at the bottom: It not being indeed in the power of Men's Faculties, ſo to ſtifle the Evidence of their Conceptions, as to baulk all ſenſe of Advantage which they find upon the Compariſon. But here then lies the Vanity and Sinfulneſs of this Procedure of our Thoughts, That our Hearts are not thereby rais'd to a Thankfulneſs to Almighty God, as the free Donor of ſuch Gifts, Abilities, and Graces: But we are apt

to

to terminate our Thoughts within our selves, where they work, and ferment, and leaven all our good Qualifications, by huffing us up with Pride.

VI. ANOTHER Vanity of our Thoughts, owing to the same Cause of an ungoverned Imagination, is seen in their Forwardness and impatience of enjoying those Objects we conceive agreeable to us; like a kind Friend, or eager Lover, that cannot stay at Home till the Person he longs for Arrives, but takes Horse to meet him, and bid him welcome on the Road: For how often do our Thoughts anticipate the Revenues, as I may say, of our Actual Enjoyments, and *Chamelion* like, live upon the *Airy* Hopes of Fruition? Whence the Reason of that common Observation, That Expectation generally

ly has the better of it, and Men meet not with that Satisfaction in the Things they expected. For besides the Emptiness and Nullity that there Naturally is in the Enjoyments of this World (they never being Design'd to fill up the large Capacities of the Heart of Man) our Fancies are always representing to us Things more eligible than they are in themselves; and our Thoughts have gone so often out before-hand, to meet and converse with their beloved Object; that they have enjoy'd and deflower'd it already, and so have foreſtal'd the Satisfaction of Possession.

Sect. 4.

WE will now, in the next place, Instance in those Defects which are observable of our Thoughts in relation to holy Things,

Things, and the Exercises of Devotion.

AND the first Weakness of our Thinking Power that I would take notice of on this Head, is the *Enthusiasm* to which it is subject; when we cannot *Govern* and *Command* our Thoughts, cannot keep them *Orderly* and within the Bounds of Sobriety; but they grow wild, and fly out into Imaginations of Visions, Revelations, immediate Conferences with the Deity, extraordinary Gifts, *&c.* whilst, generally, perhaps always in the latter Ages of the Church, such Pretensions derive not from that Supernatural and Divine Principle, to which they are ascribed; but, to say no worse of them here, from Causes purely Natural, as Constitution, Meditation, Discipline, Education, Distemper, *&c.* For, as for Constitution,

tion, who has not heard of the undoubted Effects of Natural Melancholy in this kind? What ſtrange imaginary Scenes Men of this dark Complexion have ſo ſtrongly figured to themſelves, as firmly to believe their Reality, tho' as ridiculous and inexiſtent as any in their Dreams! And as for Contemplation, which improves the former Temper; what ſtudious Perſon has not obſerv'd, how wild and ungovernable his Thoughts grow upon profound Meditation; eſpecially if dwelling upon a Noble Subject, and exalted by a ſolitary Retirement? And then 'tis obvious to imagine, how a Man, during theſe confus'd Tranſports of his Soul, may be apt to aſcribe the Reſponſes of his own bewildred Reaſon, as others do that of their Natural Conſcience, to ſome extraordinary Principle without and a-

bove

bove them. This doubtleſs, together with a frightful gloomy Diſcipline, (not to mention the Advantage the Devil takes of ſuch Occaſions) is the only Rational *Hypotheſis* whereby to ſolve thoſe Viſions, and Supernatural Conferences with the Divinity, pretended to by the Enthuſiaſtick *Meſſalians* of Old, the Rapturous and Extatick Frenſies of the famous Founder of the Jeſuites, and ſome of his Diſciples; and in ſhort, all the Legendary Traſh, treaſured up for the Advancement of the Romiſh Superſtition. For there's no doubt to be made, but that abundance of Zeal and Bigotry in Devotion, a Contemplative Life, the privacy of a Cloyſter or a Cell, together with a Melancholy Temper, which it either finds or makes, has made their *Prophets *Fools* (as *Hoſea*

* *Hoſ.* 9. 7.

ſpeaks)

ſpeaks) and their *ſpiritual Men mad*: For too much Thinking has made more Mad-men than too little. If from theſe we deſcend to Preternatural Cauſes of theſe counterfeit Operations of God's Spirit, Diſtempers; Experience will inform us what Raptures and Viſions are incident to Hyſterical and Hypocondriack Perſons. No leſs an Enthuſiaſtick than *Mahomet* himſelf is ſaid to have owed all his pretended Divinity to that Sacred Diſeaſe, as the Ancients call'd it, an Epilepſy. *Caſaubon* of *Enthuſiaſm*, tells us of thoſe, who, through a Hurt in their Brain, have fancy'd themſelves actually in Paradiſe; and of others, that amidſt the Tranſports of their Viſions and Revelations, have died of that which produc'd them, a Fever. And as to a certain extraordinary Gift, pretended to ſtill by ſome People, I believe, I could

ſhew,

shew, That a Treasure of Scripture-Phrases, a voluble Tongue, and a warm Temper, gradually heated and inflamed by the *Impetus* of Delivery, together with a good Assurance before Men, and an odd sort of Familiarity with God, have Actually done the Feat with the greatest Masters of the Talent.

II. WE may observe a Natural *Aversion* in our Thoughts to Pious Meditation. When any Object presents it self, that carries Pleasure, or Profit, or the Gratification of any of our Sensual Appetites along with it, O how greedily do our Thoughts caress, embrace, and bid it Ten thousand Welcomes! But when God, or Religion, or Death, or Judgment, or any such grave and serious Subject proffers it self to our Thoughts, how apt are they to slink away, hang back, and be shy;

shy; and after, it may be, a very short Interview, and a cold Entertainment, dismiss those Objects, make them stand by and give way to such as are more Entertaining and Diverting? The one's a welcome Guest and old Acquaintance, the other meets with the formal Reception of a Stranger, or as of a Visitant that is not agreeable. When we wind up our Minds to the highest Pin of Meditation on these Subjects, our Thoughts, after a very little stay there, presently fall down again: We are impatient and uneasie under the Stretch, and care not perhaps how soon Business, or Company, or the like, step in and set us at liberty; so averse naturally are our Thoughts, unless God has sanctified our Hearts, to converse with Holy Objects.

III. OUR Thoughts, in regard of

of Holy Duties, are apt to *miſ-time* and *miſ-place* themſelves, when, tho' they may be materially lawful and good in themſelves; yet they intrude impertinently, at a time not proper for them, when they are not call'd upon, and have no buſineſs in the Mind; like an over-officious Friend, who, tho' he means well, yet marrs a Matter through the unſeaſonableneſs of his Interpoſal. *To every thing*, ſays *Solomon*, *there is Time and Seaſon*: And 'tis the *right ordering* of things, as to Time as well as Place, that renders them proper and decent, and agreeable. A Souldier may mean very well, and do ſome acceptable Service by leaving his Rank, or quitting the Poſt aſſign'd him; and yet, for all his Succeſs, he becomes a Tranſgreſſor; and may be call'd to an Account for ſo doing: And juſt ſo it is with our Thoughts, I

mean

mean particularly, in our Religious Performances: They may be truly good in themſelves, yet if they are foreign to the matter in hand, ſtep in unſeaſonably, and break their Ranks; they are Criminals. So that when we are at our Devotions, 'tis not enough to bar out all ſinful and worldly Conceits, from crowding in upon us, but we muſt ſtave off all other Thoughts that relate not to the Matter in hand: For though a Thought, for inſtance, or purpoſe of doing ſome good Work, be in it ſelf Divine; yet 'tis a Queſtion, whether or no the Spirit that ſuggeſts it at that time be Divine; becauſe it tends then only to diſtract us, and mar the Performance we are about, as Colour miſ-placed in the Face does the Beauty: So then, God's Worſhip muſt be perform'd, not only Externally, but Internally too, in De-

Decency and Order: And we must not offer that Great Majesty, who made all Things in Weight and Measure, a tumultuary Jumble of Thoughts in our Homage to him. But as, in the Words of the Apostle, *He that is ingaged in the Ministery must wait on his Ministring, and he that Teacheth on Teaching, and he that Exhorteth on Exhortation*, &c. So he that is at his Prayers, must attend to his Prayers, to the particular Petition before him; he that is giving Thanks, to his Thanksgiving; he that is at Confession, to his Confessing, *&c.* directing all his Thoughts streight upwards towards Heaven; and he that is at Sermon, ought, for that time to apply his whole Thoughts to what is offer'd; and if any other Thoughts, howsoever lawful and good, pretend to interpose, must bid them come another time; for that

that he is now otherwise ingag'd, and not at leisure.

IV. 'TIS another sinful Infirmity in our thinking Power, that tho' we are willing to entertain pious Objects in our Hearts; yet we care not to *dwell* long upon them, so that they leave not those Prints and Impressions behind them that stick and abide by us, perfume not the Heart with that due Fragrancy and Savour they ought to leave behind them, when they are past and gone: For tho' we may not be so bad as those, of whom it may be affirmed, with the *Psalmist*, that God is not in all their Thoughts; yet of well-disposed Minds it may be said, that he is not much at a time there: 'Tis long e'er we can get sight of him through the Optick Glass of Contemplation; and when we do, our Hands shake, or something,

thing interpoſes; ſo that ever and anon we loſe ſight of him again: And this Levity of Mind, as it is ſeen in our Contemplations upon any Object; ſo more eſpecially in the performance of Holy Duties. We ſet forth in Prayer, it may be very well, with a due Compoſure of Mind, and humble ſenſe of our Obligations to God, and Dependance on Him: But perhaps e'er we are got half way on with our Work, our Thoughts which ſet out with our Lips, have given them the ſlip, and left them to go on by themſelves; whilſt they in the Interim have rambled perhaps from one Corner of the Earth to another, and made the *Grand Tour* of the world: When we ſhould earneſtly ſeek God by Prayer, and our Souls and Spirits ſhould aſcend ſtraight upwards in direct Rays of fervent Devotion; behold them toſſed like

a dried Leaf before the wind, or as an empty Cask upon the Waves: For, *Instead of Good, Evil is present with us and we cannot do the things that we would*: But the World and the Devil knock at the Door of our Hearts, step in and desire to speak with our Thoughts, divert them from their Business, and make a Man's Heart go after his Covetousness, as the Prophet speaks; after his Pleasure, his Sins, or his Secular Imployments: Any thing that was forgot before, will be sure then to present it self to the Mind, and sue for Audience. Nay, many times foreign Thoughts come about us, like Bees, as *David* speaks of his Enemies, in whole Swarms together, and with their humming Noise distract our Attention; or like *Abraham*'s Fowls in Flocks, to peck at and deform our Sacrifice. And thus, again, it is in that other

Branch

Branch of Religious Duty, Hearing of the Word; for no doubt but any Man, upon a just recollection of his Thoughts, will find they were out of Church several times whilst his Person was there; at Home, in the Shop, or the Coffer, or indeed any where, but where they should have been: In fine, either out of Doors, or at Play perhaps within, as much as the Children generally are without. But then take any other sort of Objects, Pleasurable, or Profitable, or Honourable, and your Thoughts shall dwell, and hover, and brood over them, all the Day, said I, nay, in the Night too, disturb your Repose, and awake you; for *the abundance of the Rich*, to use the Wise Man's Instance, *will not suffer him to sleep*. And so it is of any other worldly Project, gratifying Men's Lusts, compassing a Revenge, or the like:

Of the latter of which, the ſame Wiſe Man ſpeaks; *They ſleep not except they have done miſchief, and their ſleep is taken away unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall.* So intent are Men's Thoughts, ſo cloſely do they faſten upon theſe Earthly, Senſual, and many times Deviliſh Concernments, whilſt they are preſently weary, and friſk off from any thing that is Sacred, and ſober and ſerious.

NOW this wandring in Prayer and other Holy Duties is reſolvable into ſeveral Cauſes: As,

I. INTO our complex'd Conſtitution of Soul and Body. Whilſt our Souls are lodg'd in theſe pitiful-Tenements of Clay, they cannot help being affected with the inconveniences of their Habitation. They are confined to the uſe of Bodily Spirits in their moſt abſtracted Ope-

Operations, and every considerable Disorder in the Blood and Spirits does therefore of necessity produce a proportionable Disorder in the Soul in Thinking: And being surrounded with such variety of Objects and Business, whilst we Live in this material World, which through the Intervention of our Senses, leave their Ideas in the Head behind them; the Eye of the Mind can no more help looking upon them, when they are jogg'd and thrown in its way, than the Eyes of our Bodies can help seeing when they are open, or our Ears hearing the Sounds that strike them. All this is Natural and Necessary as the unavoidable Result of the dependance of the Soul in its most Spiritual Operations upon the Frame and Contexture of our Bodies, during their Conjunction: And we may as well think of ceas-

ing to be what we are, and of casting the Man into a new Mould, as of a total Prevention of this Infirmity of our Constitution. And this being so, we must expect to meet with it in our Prayers, as well as in other Business of our Lives. 'Tis in Heaven alone, where the Faculties of both Soul and Body shall be inlarged and refined, and we shall have but One Object of our Thoughts, God, who shall be All in All, that our Souls shall cleave inseparably to him, without the least Avocation. All which may serve to qualifie, by the by, the Scruples and Vexations incident to some tender Minds, who are apt perhaps to entertain too hard Thoughts of themselves, because they cannot so manage their Thoughts, that they shall regularly attend upon God's Service, without Breaks and Chasms in them, without falling off now

and

and then, and straying from their present Business: For 'tis impossible in the very nature of things, our Composition, totally to prevent the first beginnings, or Sallies of the Mind towards wandring; for the Spirits, by whose Intervention we perform these Mental Operations, will not bear so rigid a Fixation; all we can do in the Case, and that we must do; is to keep a strict Eye upon our Thoughts, to drive away the Fowls that light upon our Sacrifice, to endeavour continually to check and controll and stop them in their Career to other Objects; and when at any time they have given us the slip, to call them upon the first Discovery home again to their Business, and regret our Weakness: And if we thus both bewail, and labour to remedy those Excursions of our Thoughts, which we cannot totally hinder; they are

not our Sin, but Infirmity, which will never affect our main State.

II. DISTRACTING Thoughts in Prayer are very much owing to that natural Averſion we obſerv'd in us to things Spiritual and Divine: For ſuch Imployment of our Thoughts being therefore a ſort of *preternatural* Force upon them; the *Spring* that bends them Heavenward will be apt to relax, and give way to the contrary tendency of our Minds downwards; ſo that leaving thoſe unwelcome Objects, they preſently fall back again into the Company of the old Familiars of their Thoughts.

III. OUR Diſtractions proceed, in a great meaſure, from an over-active and ungovern'd Imagination: 'Tis the Quick-ſilver-part in our Metal, that runs glibly up and down,

down, and ſhoots, as it were, in our Minds, like Meteors in the Air, traverſing our Devotions with Ten thouſand frivolous and fooliſh Conceits, preſenting us with thoſe fine Schemes and Images of things, Riches, Honour, or the like; till the diſtracted wandring Man, inſtead of his Maker, Worſhips all the while perhaps the Idol of his own and the Devil's making. But we have Diſcours'd the Extravagancies of this Faculty before.

IV. DISTRACTIONS in Prayer proceed frequently from an intemperate Love of the World, and the Cares that attend its Enjoyments; which ſo often ingroſs our Hearts, that we no ſooner ſet about holy Duties, than they juſtle the one thing needful out of our Minds, and make *Mary*'s good Part ſtand

by, and give way to * *Martha's* Concern for the World and the Family. 'Tis certainly one of the most ridiculous, and yet most general Frailties incident to our corrupt Nature, to use this World, as if neither we, nor the Fashion of it were to pass away; which is just as if a Traveller, with business of infinite Importance on his Hand, should loyter and take up with his Inn on the Road, without ever farther pursuing the end of his Journey. And possibly most of the Sins that are committed in the World, are fairly resolvable into a too passionate Fondness for it. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, is a Saying that carries a greater Force of Truth in it, than possibly most Men are aware of. For their Principles of Action are opposite, their

* *Luke* 10. 42.

Interests,

Intereſts are oppoſite, and they require a quite different Frame of Mind in their reſpective Votaries: And we know who has told us no leſs truely than roundly, *That if any man love the world, the love of God is not him*: For it ties down our Apprehenſions to things mean, and trivial, and baſe; and ſtifles and chokes our Deſires of ſuch as are Spiritual and Divine: It extinguiſhes all holy fervour of Spirit, eſtranges from God, and puts out that Sacred Flame of Love for him, which is the very Life and Soul of our Devotions to him: It crowds into the Church and Cloſet with us, and like the Sons of *Zerviah*, is too hard for *David*; ſo that many times, with *Demas*, we *forſake the Lord* in our Thoughts, even whilſt we pretend to do him Homage, *having lov'd this preſent World*, whoſe *Thorns* (*i. e.* its Cares

and Riches) * *choaks the Seeds*, in our Saviour's eſtimate, of all the Good that is ſown amongſt them; and therefore it is, that when God requir'd the Male Children of the *Jews* thrice a Year to attend upon his Service at *Jeruſalem*; he promis'd that † *no Man ſhould deſire their Land when they ſhould go up to appear before the Lord their God, thrice in the Year*; for the Fears and Jealouſies that might otherwiſe have ſeiz'd them, would have divided their Hearts betwixt God and their Families at Home, and ſo have blaſted the Fruits of ſo laborious and univerſal a Journey: And upon the ſame account it is, that the Apoſtle adviſes ſingle Perſons, that were able to receive it, to continue rather in that State, in times of Difficulty and Diſtreſs; that they

* *Luke* 8. 7, 14. † *Exod.* 34. 24.

might

might *attend upon the Lord without those Distractions* of Mind, that are almost unavoidably incident to Persons deeply intangled in Secular Concernments.

V. ANY reigning and prevailing Lust will both obstruct and distract our Devotions: For where our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also; and especially, at the time of our Religious Services, will be apt to run out of the Closet and the Church to meet and chat with their best Beloved: We may indeed, at such Junctures be Proof against the Courtship of other inferiour Temptations, and therefore the Devil takes especial Care then to set the Sin of our Bosom on work, to imploy the Favourite-Lust for our Diversion. And this is so usual a Stratagem to decoy our Hearts from our Services, that we may

may hereby certainly discover our * darling topping Lust, the ὕψωμα of our depraved Hearts, that which all the others pay Obedience to, and do it Homage; for that to be sure is it which pretends the greatest interest in us, and thereupon disturbs us most in holy Duties.

VI. OUR distractions in Prayfrequently proceed from those Objects that strike our Senses during the Service. For 'tis not in the compass of our Powers to give any distinct and tolerable attendance to several, and perhaps contrary Objects at the same time, so that the Ideas of those we let in at such junctures, at the doors of our Senses, turn the Mind out of its way, and divert it from the prosecution of its proper Business. An open

* 2 Cor. 10. 5.

and

and erect ear to every Sound will make diſcord in the Brain, and vagrant Eyes will cauſe a wandring Heart: If *Dinah* like they gad abroad to ſee the Daughters of the Land, 'tis odds but they meet with Objects in their jant that will commit a Rape upon them. And therefore, we ſhould, either, with *Job*, *make a Covenant* with onr Senſes, when we engage in holy Duties, let our *Eyes look right on*, as *Solomon* ſpeaks, and our *Eye-lids look ſtraight before us*, or ſhut up their Doors as much as poſſible, to exclude the foreign Diſturbers of our Attention; for nothing poſſibly promotes fixation of Thought more than the cloſing of our Eyes: Experience tells us, that Darkneſs is an undoubted help to intenſe Meditation, and the *Arabian* Proverb imports, That when the Five Windows, thoſe of Senſe, are ſhut up, the

the Houſe of the Mind is then fulleſt of Light: I might aſſign here ſeveral other negative Cauſes, as I may ſtyle them, of this defect, as the want of a true love of God; want of a devout habit of Mind; want of preparation of the Heart, before we enter upon Religious Duties, *&c.* But theſe will fall better under the laſt general Head of Diſcourſe, the *Regimen* or Government of our Thoughts upon theſe and other occaſions: And therefore,

VII. AND *Laſtly*, There is no doubt to be made, but that the diſtractions and wandrings of our Thoughts in Prayer, are in a great meaſure, owing to the Machinations and Experiments of the Devil upon us; for tho' in theſe ordinary Caſes we at preſent ſpeak of, 'tis a difficult, and perhaps unneceſſary

Task

Task to discover, whether the Devil or our own Thoughts are first in the Transgression (for they are both ready enough to join in the Confederacy against us) and doubtless, Men are apt many times to charge the inbred Corruptions of their own depraved Nature to the account of that Infernal Spirit, and so paint him blacker, if possible, than he is: And it were besides, an over-nice and fruitless enquiry, to search into those Artifices and Methods whereby he may Rationally be supposed to withdraw our Attention from our Prayers: For we cannot determine, how far he may be concern'd in the use of any of those means of Distraction we have hitherto mention'd; as the love of the World, the wandring of the Senses, the painted Scenes of the Imagination, and the Importunities of any reigning and pre-

prevailing Luſt. Nor can we with any certainty define what Feats he is able to perform upon ſuch Occaſions, by outward Diſturbances and inward Injections: For we can gueſs but darkly at the Operations of Spirits, how far, or by what way they can inſinuate and communicate their Motions to our Minds; yet who ſo conſiders how inſtrumental he is in other Sins, as in * *David*'s Numbering of the People: † *Judas*'s Betraying his Maſter: ‖ *Ananias*'s Lying to the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.* more particularly, how much we are many times peſter'd with foreign and improper Thoughts during our Approaches to the Throne of Grace, whilſt we find a great eaſe and freedom in our Minds when they are ingag'd in worldly Buſineſs, or in

* 1 *Chron.* 21. 1. † *John* 13. 27. ‖ *Acts* 5. 3.

any

any other Philoſophical or indifferent Contemplation: And who ſo reflects farther, how much it is his Intereſt to ſpoil and break off our Commerce with Heaven, and blaſt the Fruit of all our Prayers, ſince this viſibly advances the intereſt of his Kingdom; muſt grant, in the general, That he is doubtleſs particularly concern'd in the wandring of our Thoughts during Divine Service. Accordingly we find, that *St. *James* requires us to *draw nigh to God*, he bids us at the ſame time, *reſiſt the Devil*, which is a plain Evidence, That when we come to *ſtand before the* Lord, *Satan ſtands at* our *right-hand*, in the Prophet *Zachary*'s Language, † *ready to reſiſt us*: And our Saviour himſelf in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, tells us plainly, That || *the*

* *Jam.* 4. 7, 8. † *Zach.* 3. 1. || *Luke* 8.

Devil,

Devil, or, in St. *Matthew*'s Language, * *the wicked One, taketh away the Word out of some Mens Hearts, lest they should believe and be Saved.* They are the Hearers by the way-side, our Lord there speaks of, such as in St. *Chrysostom*'s Exposition advert not, nor attend to what is deliver'd; your careless supine Auditors, who, while the Preacher toils, *Christ* speaks by him, and the Holy Ghost is ready to Co-operate, are amusing themselves with Ten thousand incoherent and foreign Imaginations: And what the Devil is so ready to do at Sermons, he will think it much more his interest to do at Prayers: And therefore, methinks, it should be a powerful inducement to engage Men to a serious Attention on both those Occasions; to consider, That whilst

* *Matth.* 13.

they

they are led aside with those vain Imaginations, that interrupt their attending to what they themselves say to God, or others speak to them in his Name; the Devil all the while, if we'll believe our Lord himself; is busie with them, lays close Siege to their Hearts, and makes them more effectually serve him, than the Lord that bought them. Not that I look upon every such assault and even success of the Tempter upon us, as an Argument of an Irreligious Temper and Reprobate Mind: For the Devil, who is all Spirit, can hold out the Siege against us, longer than we, who dwell in Houses of Clay, can sustain his Incursions: The very Infirmity of our Composition, where tho' the Spirit may be willing, yet the Flesh is weak; will necessarily make our Minds nod, take them off their Guard now and then, and consequently

quently give the Tempter an unavoidable advantage over us: Yet if these wandrings of our Spirits are grievous to our Minds upon Recollection; if we hence learn what unprofitable Servants we are, even in our best Performances; and humble our selves hereupon in the sight of God, begging him to *whip* those *Thieves*, that steal away our Thoughts, *out of the Temple* of our Souls; we shall not stand chargeable with the Robberies they commit upon us: But as the Motions of the good Spirit, when rejected, do so much the more inhaunce Mens Guilt; so will the Injections of the evil One, when guarded against, as far as may be, and resisted; be sanctified, through the Divine Mercy, to our greater advantage. In fine, this wandring of the Mind in Holy Duties tho', in its best Construction 'tis a great

Un-

Unhappineſs; yet will be only ſo far imputed for Sin to us, as it is voluntary in its Cauſe, and in our own power to remedy, and is, in its Progreſs, whence ſoever it derives, indulged and complyed with.

Sect. 5.

WE proceed now to another more terrible ſort of Thoughts, wherewith the Minds of Men are many times unhappily infeſted. For it is not unuſual, for ſome Tempers eſpecially to be aſſaulted with abundance of odd, extravagant, and horrid Thoughts breaking in upon them, in ſpite of all Guard and Oppoſition. Thus you ſhall have ſome, thoſe particularly of muſing Heads and melancholy Diſpoſitions, preſs'd upon now and then with Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous Cogi-

Cogitations, tempted either, with * *David*, to deny God, from a consideration of the unequal Dispensation of his Providence in the World, or some other such illogical Topick, or else through the pressure of their Affliction, or the like, to think hardly of him, to deny him, in his Attributes, to *charge* him *foolishly*, and *to Curse him and die*. Others you shall have possessed with dismal Thoughts of their having sinned the Sin against the Holy Ghost, of their being Reprobates, cast off of God, without the verge of his Mercy, and seal'd up for Destruction. Others, Lastly, there are hurried on in their Minds to the commission of some great and crying Sins, even against the bent of their own Propensions, and that sometimes as far as Self-Murder it self, *&c.*

* *Psal.* 73. 2.

NOW

NOW these Thoughts being all of 'em a kin, and of the self same Family; I shall not go about to treat of them severally and apart, but together, and in the following Method.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, That there is some difficulty in stating their proper Rise and Origine. But that,

II. 'TIS of great use to know it, and therefore

III. IN order thereunto, I shall assign some Marks and Characteristicks, whereby it may be known when they are of their Father the Devil.

IV. I shall shew, That howsoever troublesom and afflicting they are,

are, they do not affect nor endanger our main State.

V. And lastly, I shall endeavour to prescribe the Regulation of them.

I. IT must be owned, there is some difficulty in the enquiry into the Rise and Origine of these horrid Thoughts, and 'tis hard to know many times whether they are the genuine Issue of our own corrupt Nature, or spurious Brats falsly father'd on us by the Devil. For he can inject as much and more then our Corruptions can suggest, and yet possibly, on the other hand, they are able of themselves, to carry us on to those excesses that look *diabolical*, and when they joyn hand in hand, 'tis hard to know whether of the two first made the Motion, or proves the abler Sollicitor of their common cause of Sin:

Out

Out of the Heart, says our Saviour, *proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries*, &c. there they are *conceived*, whosoever, *begets* them. And [a] St. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, resolves some of those black Crimes, for which he brands the heathen World into *the Lusts of their own Hearts*, and yet at the same time he has given us to understand, [b] That *the Prince of the power of the Air wrought in all such Children of Disobedience*. And indeed, as the Doctrine of Divine and Humane Concurrence in the Progress of true Piety is very plain and legible, in the Scriptures, so as that we are said, for instance, [c] to *be washed and sanctified by the Spirit of God*, and yet are required [d] *to cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit*: So are the same

[a] *Rom.* 1. 24. [b] *Eph.* 2. 2. [c] 1 *Cor.* 6. 11. [d] 2 *Cor.* 7. 1.

Sins in different places charged upon the Devil, and our own Hearts too. * As, *David*'s numbring the People is ascribed to Satan, and yet the King takes it to himself: Just as it is said of † *Ananias his lying to the Holy Ghost*, that *Satan* put him on it, and yet that he *conceived it in his Heart.*

NOW tho' it be somewhat difficult, as we have seen, to know the true Parent of these hideous Thoughts we speak of: Yet,

II. IT is of no small use and concernment to meet with some satisfaction in the Matter; for the sad Experince, I believe, of many, especially Hypocondriack Persons, tells us, (the darkness of whose Humor is best fitted to receive

* 1 *Chron.* 21. 1. *v.* 8. † *Acts* 5. 3, 4.

such

such black Impressions,) how apt the grand Enemy of our Peace is to throw these *fiery Darts* into our Hearts, and then to accuse us of their burning within us; to commit a Rape upon our Spirits, and then lay the Child at our Doors; whereby he many times creates such infinite Disquiet of Thought, Horror of Conscience, and Astonishment of all the Powers and Faculties of tender Minds; that they are apt to look upon themselves as rejected of God, delivered up to Satan, and in such a desperate and forlorn Condition, that the violent Hand perhaps is sometimes thought of, to put a Period to the comfortless and wretched Life: And therefore, I say, it may be of excellent Use, on this Argument for the Support and Encouragement of these unhappy Persons; to point out such *Criterions* and Characteristicks, where-

by * *the Buffetings of Satan*, as we render it, may be in some measure distinguished from the genuine Production of our own Minds, and those generally assigned by Divines are such as follow.

I. THEY are the Devil's Thoughts, not ours, when the *Matter* of them surpasses the suggestions of our natural Corruption: For Nature her self, unless turn'd perfectly Diabolical, shrinks, and gives back at those outragiously wicked Motions, that pass now and then in some Mens Minds, and there to be sure they are the assaults of the Devil upon them, to Vex, Disquiet and Confuse their Spirits; tho' he chance to prove unable to prevail with them. An evil Heart 'tis true, may through its own inherent

* 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

Wicked-

Wickedness, conjure up those frightful Spectres, of Thoughts, that would scare and amaze other Persons: But that it should be able, of it self, to terrifie it self, to fill the Mind with Horror, to startle its own Corruptions, and go directly contrary to its own Affections, Inclinations, and Reluctances; borders too much upon a contradiction to be admitted. No Man for instance, of himself, can be studious of Life, and yet at the same time entertain Thoughts of turning *felo de se*. The Suggestions of this kind that derive purely from our own Hearts, are all ways more or less agreeable to Nature, pleasing to our Affections, and fall in with our own Inclinations.

II. THE injections of the Devil are discernable from the productions of our own Hearts, by

the *Manner* of their assailing us. Corrupt Nature proceeds orderly and deliberately with us, tampers and argues with our Thoughts, and through the deceitfulness of Sin, gradually gets ground upon us; till by steps and successive advances it compleats its intended Victory: For our own Lusts do not force, but **draw us away*, wheedle us on, and entice us. But 'tis otherwise with Satanical Injections of this horrid kind: They are a sort of *motus in instanti*, dart and break in upon our Thoughts, howsoever otherwise imployed and taken up, without any previous intimation of their approaches: The Devil in these cases sends no Harbingers before him to prepare his way, but forces his passage on a suddain, shoots like that Lightning, to which our Saviour compares his Fall, † into

* *Jam.* 14. † *Luc.* 10. 18.

our

our Minds, and Hell takes our Heaven by Violence.

AND as Thoughts of this kind are thus suddain in their first attacks upon us, so are they observed generally to be very pertinacious and obstinate in the continuance of them; which is a

III. INDICATION, That they proceed from ὁ ἀντικείμενος: For 'tis highly agreeable to the innate Malice of his Temper, incessantly to alarm the Fort of our Souls with perplexities and anxieties of Mind about his injections; even then when he sees he is unable to carry it. The

IV. AND last Sign of his being the Author of these Thoughts within us, is from the Effects that generally attend them. Our own

Thoughts being the natural *Iſſue* of our own Hearts, do not ſcare nor affright us, nor are follow'd with any extraordinary perturbation of Mind and Spirit: And therefore when Men meet with ſuch Thoughts, as are accompanied with an Horror and Dread upon their Spirits, with confuſion of Mind, aſtoniſhment of its Powers, and perhaps with equal Agonies and Convulſions of Body; there to be ſure the Devil is the Sole Operator. Agreeable whereunto is that Obſervation of Antiquity, That they were falſe Prophets, and of Diabolical Inſpiration, who were acted in a confuſed, perplexed, and diſtracted manner: The principal Teſt this, whereby the Catholick Chriſtians were wont to diſtinguiſh an Enthuſiaſtick *Montaniſt* from a Divinely inſpird Prophet; as may be

be seen in * *Eusebius*, where we find *Miltiades*, an Ecclesiastick Author, Writing a whole Tract upon this Subject; and *Asterius Urbanus* challenging them all to produce him one single Instance of a Prophet, under either Old or New Testament, acted after their dark and impetuous manner. For the Devil dealt violently with his Enthusiasts, confus'd and oppress'd their Understandings, distorted and convuls'd their Bodily Organs; and in short, put them like the unhappy Persons we now speak of, into most terrible Agonies of Soul and Body. *Pythia* her self never mounted the *Tripos* but with Horror, where she fom'd, rav'd and tore her Hair, like a Drunken or a Frantick Person, whilst the Prophetick Fit lasted on her: And this I was the more will-

* *Euseb.* lib. 5. ch. 16, 17.

ing, by the by, to take notice of, becauſe the darkneſs of Mind, and violent agitation of Body, obſervable amongſt a Company of poor beſotted, if not ſometimes Poſſeſſed Sectaries amongſt our ſelves, agree ſo exactly with the Deſcriptions Antiquity has left us of thoſe Children of Diſobedience the Devil wrought in then; that one may very well be tempted to conclude, He repeats the Experiment now and then upon theſe Men too.

COME we now in the Fourth place to conſider how far theſe horrid and amazing Thoughts affect our main State, and touch our Salvation; an Argument ſo much the more neceſſary, by how much 'tis an undoubted Stratagem of the Devil to urge the incurſion of ſuch Thoughts upon theſe unhappy Perſons

sons, as cause of Despair and evident Argument of their Reprobation; and here it is to be observed.

1. THAT it is not altogether in our Power to govern our Thoughts, they are not absolutely subject to our Dominion: For the Heart of Man is as it were an High Road, through which Passengers both good and bad will take their way, without asking leave of us: Or, if you will take it under the Notion of a Publick House, which is open to all Comers, not only to the sober but to lewd and debauch'd Company, whose wild Roarings, Curses, and Huzza's will strike our Ears, and we cannot help it. For we can no more prevent our *simple Apprehensions* of Things, than a sound and open Eye can prevent its seeing; and the one is no more polluted by a vicious Object than the

the other; and therefore to be sure God will never condemn us for what we cannot help nor hinder. For.

2. IT can never be Sin to us, because unavoidable, to be subject to the Inroads of these black blasphemous Thoughts upon our Minds; no more than 'tis Sin in us to be liable to the Assaults of any other *Temptation*. What worse is a sober Person for being tempted only to excess of Drinking, or a chaste Virgin to Incontinence? Our Lord himself was *tempted* to commit the most gross and abominable Idolatry, and yet notwithstanding that, was as free from Sin in his Thoughts, as from Guile in his Mouth; because he resisted the Temptation, and baffled the Tempter: We Sin only then when we basely give way and comply with him. The Law of *Moses*

excus'd

excus'd a Virgin that was forced in the Field (far from hearing:) **For as when a Man riſeth againſt his Neighbour and ſlayeth him, even ſo is this matter.* So when the Devil commits a Rape upon our Souls by Atheiſtical, Blaſphemous, or any other Horrid Injections; if we cry out for Help, abhor the baſe Suggeſtions in our Judgment, our Will and Affections; great is our Victory, and greater ſhall be our Crown and Glory: Guilt is our Portion only then when we embrace the bold Raviſher of our Hearts, and kiſs and hug the Production of ſo monſtrous a Coalition. He were highly Criminal, who in a beſieged Town ſhould wilfully ſet his own Houſe on Fire; but a Man certainly is not reſponſible for the Fire-balls and Bombs that are thrown in by

* *Deut.* 22, 26.

the

the Enemy; all he can, and consequently is bound to do, is, to use his best Diligence to extinguish the Fire enkindled by them: And thus it is with these Thoughts we speak of: If we make them out of the Ammunition of our own Hearts, we are accountable for them; but if the Devil, who lays Siege to us, throw them in, we are no farther concern'd, than to take the best Care we can to put them out, to suppress and hinder their spreading: For *that which is from within* only *defiles a Man*, not that which is thrown in from without: If we are purely passive in the matter, and joyn not with the Devil's Suggestions, so long they are his Thoughts, let him look to them, they are none of ours, we have nothing to do with them.

III. IT would be considered, that these

these frightful Thoughts derive many times more from ill Habits of Body than of Mind, more from poor blood and bad Spleen, than from Indisposition of Soul and falsness of Heart. *Melancholy*, whether natural, or acquired by Sickness, Losses, Afflictions, *&c.* (and such Persons are most infested with these horrid Thoughts) is of it self apt to fill Mens Heads with infinite Crotchets, the blackest Conceits, and saddest Surmises: It creates the Images of Apparitions, Mormoes and Spectres, and then inclines the poor deluded Man to take them for Realities. Whilst, alas! his Malady is generally better cured by good Air, Dyet, and Chalybeats, then by all the Recipes of Divinity: And then what reason has a Man to be troubled in Mind, or dejected in Spirit, more for this than any other Distemper? Why is poor Blood and

and a melancholy Disposition a surer Mark of the Divine Displeasure, than the Burnings of a Fever, or the Shiverings of an Ague?

IV IT may be added, for the Support and Encouragement of these dejected Spirits, That their Malady is rarely incident but to Religious Dispositions and Pious Minds, that live under a tender Sense of their Duty, and an awful Dread of the Divine Displeasure. Were they in those Bonds of Iniquity, and that State of Reprobation they figure to themselves; they would never be so happy as to experiment any of these Spiritual Conflicts in their Bosoms *Non timeo hos pingues* said *Cæsar* of *Dolobella* and his roaring Crew; but sober *Brutus* and *Cassius* stuck in his Stomack? The Devil, like him, never troubles his Head with your supine unwary

Sin-

Sinners, who are amusing their Heads with a thousand wicked Projects that advance the Interests of his Kingdom: For he might chance to jog them out of their Sleep of Sin, and awaken them to Repentance, and so out-wit himself, should he fright them by these terrible Injections: And therefore if **Ephraim is joined to Idols*, if Men, are deeply ingaged in notorious Sins; he too says, like God, *let him alone.* For why should the Prince of Darkness be thought so weak a Statesman, as to make War upon those who have already submitted to his Government, and sworn Homage to him? But then he uses all the Black Art of his Infernal Suggestions, to stop, and vex, or disquiet the Religious Man in his holy Course. 'Twas righteous *Job* that

Hosea 4. 17.

he

he would fain have prevail'd with to * *curse God to his Face*; and 'twas the Holy JESUS that was tempted by him to that horrid Blasphemy, of renouncing the Worship of the great God, and substituting him in his stead. So that, upon the whole, Temptations of this nature being rather an Argument of a pious than irreligious Temper; ought, in just construction, to be so far from ministring Sorrow, that they may afford even matter of Comfort and Rejoycing to those that are exercised therein.

V. AND, *Lastly*, Tho' it must be confest, that these black Injections may be sometimes, like other Judgments, the Chastisement of our Sins, as of our Carnal Security for instance, of neglect of our

* *Job* 1. 11. & 2. 5.

Thoughts,

Thoughts, grieving the Holy Spirit, *&c.* yet they are even then, only *the evil of Punishment*; as any other Infliction may be, not of Sin to us, unless we like, comply with, and approve them: And when they have once gained the Design, for which our Heavenly Father sent them on his Children; as suppose the awakening them to a more through Repentance than they have yet arriv'd at, taking off their Inclinations to the Enjoyments of this present Life, teaching them a more perfect Recumbency upon God, abating their Pride, lest they should be with St. *Paul*, * *above measure exalted*, &c. then he takes off his afflicting Hand, restrains the Tempter, quiets the Mind, and speaks Peace to his People.

* 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

CHAP.

CHAP. III. SECT. I.

THUS much of the Second Part of our Subject, the Defects, Failures, and Infirmities incident to our Thoughts. We are now arriv'd at the Third and Laſt, which is to preſcribe ſome Rules for the Government and Manage of them. And this I will endeavour to do.

I. WITH Relation particularly to theſe horrid Thoughts we have juſt now Treated of.

II. WITH Relation to the ſinful Infirmities of our Thoughts in Religious Duties.

III. AND *Laſtly*, I ſhall lay down ſuch Rules as concern the Government of our Thoughts in general. Firſt,

First, I shall endeavour to shew, how we are to behave our selves with particular Relation to these horrid Thoughts we have just now Treated of. And,

I. THERE is no doubt to be made, but that Prayer, which is so proper a Means to the attainment of every good and perfect Gift, and so powerful an Amulet against all the Evils we labour under; will be of special Use in the Case before us, *Is any among you afflicted, says St.* James, *let him pray:* And What greater Affliction, and consequently more pressing Occasion to Prayer, than those Perplexities of Mind we speak of? For when can it be more opportune to call in the Aid of Heaven, than when we are thus immediately Assaulted by Hell? What fitter to quench these

* *fiery*

* *fiery Darts of the* Wicked, than the *Shield of Faith* in God, expreſs'd by our importunate Applications to him for Relief? For then muſt it be more eſpecially acceptable to God, to teſtifie an entire Dependance on, and Confidence in him; when he ſeems moſt of all to hide his Face from us in Diſpleaſure. For if we thus pour out our Supplications before him, hungring and thirſting after the aſſiſtances of his Spirit, and the Teſtimony of our Conſciences, to ſupport us in theſe Spiritual Conflicts; he has promiſed and therefore no doubt, but in his own good time, he will ſhine upon us with the Light of his Countenance, and yield us Refreſhment: Will put his Hook into the Noſe, and his Bridle into the Lips of the Tempter, turn him back by

* *Eph.* 6. 16.

the

the way by which he came, and give Eaſe to thoſe who have ſuffered ſo much in themſelves, for fear only of having Offended him.

II. ANOTHER proper Remedy in this Caſe, is to avoid Idleneſs and ſolitary Retirements: It muſt indeed be own'd in my Opinion, that Solitude is a mighty help to Elevation of Mind, Application of Thought, Recollection of Spirit, and conſequently to true private Devotion; which might be the Reaſon, I preſume, why our Lord himſelf, on this occaſion, added ſometimes even the Darkneſs of the Night to the Retirement of the Mountains. But yet, in this Caſe, when the Mind, left to it ſelf, is apt continually to dwell upon one's own ſuppoſed deſperate Condition, and be perpetually haunted with the Ghoſts it has conjured up;

'tis

'tis far more advisable to repair to the City than to the Desart, and choose Company before a Retreat. The one will help to lay the Evil Spirit, the other as certainly improves its Terrors. If one fall in Society, another may lift him up again; but in Privacy, a Man must stand upon his own bottom, and be in some measure self-sufficient to Encounter with the Tempter; and that in Circumstances most advantagious to his Design upon us. For the Temptations of Solitude are, I verily believe, more dangerous than those to be met with upon the Stage of Action; because it lays us more especially open to the Assaults of the Tempter: For which Reason 'tis Rationally presumed he made choice of the Wilderness, when he encountred with our Lord and Saviour; and both Reason, and the Experience of several, of

Ignatius

Ignatius particularly, that famous Founder of the Jesuites Order, and eminent instance of this Truth, assures us, That they who give themselves much up to Solitude, are infinitely obnoxious to Satanical Illusions: If therefore we would divert and break the Force of these frightful Thoughts and Suggestions; we would do well to keep our Minds imploy'd, either in innocent and agreeable Conversation, or when out of that, in our own and proper Imployments; for Idleness is a sort of Solitude of the Mind, even in Places of the greatest Concourse, and gives the Devil as great an Advantage against us, as the other Solitude of the Desart or the Cloister.

III, 'TIS advised by Divines in these Cases, rather to slight than to struggle and contest with the

Tempter; not to argue the Case, or enter into Parley with him about one's Condition; (for the Conflict will gall and chafe our Minds the more) but, as far as we are able, to let his Hellish Injections go as they come, and be no more concerned for his Blaspheming within us, than for the Curses and Imprecations of any other lewd Company, that we cannot get rid of. For Opposition does but perpetuate the Fray, and make the Battel the hotter: A wild Beast, if you violently stop its Passage, may chance to run over you; let it alone, 'twill go the gentler by you: The way then in this Case is, not to *resist the Devil*, otherwise than by Prayer, but to let him spend his Fury, and bear his Shocks with a severe Contempt of them, with a resolv'd Firmness of Mind, and Sedateness of Temper, till his Force dissipates and wastes away of it self. IV.

IV. AND *Laſtly*, A conſtant Proſecution of one's Duty, howſoever irkſome and uncomfortable it may appear; will certainly in time give the Mind Eaſe, and ſet it at Liberty from theſe Helliſh Thoughts: The Clouds that darken the Mind now, will by Perſeverance in Duty be ſucceeded by a perfect Day, a Day of Glory and Eternal Brightneſs. For God will Judge no Man for what he cannot help nor hinder, but will certainly Reward him who does him the beſt Service he is able, and is grieved only he can do him no better. For 'tis true in this Caſe too, that if there be *a willing Mind, it is accepted according to what a Man has, and not according to what he has not*,

Sect. 2.

PROCEED we now to such Considerations as may be proper to Govern and Fix our Thoughts, during our Attendance upon Religious Duties.

AND here we cannot more profitably commence this important Work, than by the same measure we at first prescrib'd on the last Part of this Subject; that is, by Addressing to God for his Aid and Assistance in the matter, that not only the *Words of our Mouth*, but *the Meditations of our Heart*, (especially in our immediate Approaches to Him) may be *always acceptable in the sight of the Lord our God, and our Redeemer.* For Prayer it self will facilitate that Application of Mind which is necessary to a due Per-

Performance of it; in as much as it purifies the Heart, ſublimates the Spirit, and exalts it above its natural Pitch and Level: For by often returning to God, and carefully renewing our Commerce with Heaven, we ſhake off our Criminal Diſpoſitions; and what was at firſt irkſom and weariſomneſs to the Fleſh; becomes at length an eaſie and a pleaſurable Exerciſe. He will never be able to arrive to any tolerable Degree of Perfection in any Attainment, whoſe Deſires do not firſt carry him on towards it with ſome Eagerneſs and Impatience; and Prayer is nothing but putting our Deſires into Suit. He is certainly a very Temerarious Perſon, who commences any Undertaking, without Invoking firſt the Divine Favour and Aſſiſtance: The only proper Foundation-Stone whereon to build our Hopes of Succeſs in a-

ny of our Enterprises, and judged as such even by the Heathen World it self, who generally commenc'd their Works with Apprecation of good Success from the great Author of it. *Cæsar* being to enter the Senate, Sacrifis'd first, and Prayer among them was a constant Attendance upon that Performance; and *Appian* particularly speaks of that Act, not as of an extraordinary, but as of a customary thing. And if this piece of Homage be so highly our Duty in enterprising things that do not, I may say, so nearly regard him; how much more will it be so in our Endeavours to attain that Grace which flows directly from him, immediately concerns his Honour, and is terminated in him, as its final and onely proper Object?

II. ANOTHER proper Remedy for the Government of our

Thoughts in Religious Duties, is to qualifie and prepare our Hearts before-hand for the Performance: To discharge all Thoughts of the World for that time, from their Attendance, to require them to stand by, to *tarry here or there, whilst we go and pray yonder.* 'Tis true indeed, that the *Loins of a Mind*, throughly principled with the Love and Fear of the Divine Majesty, are always *ready girt about* for the Sacrifice; such Persons living under a constant Sense and Practice of it: But we address not here to the *whole*, who have no need of a Spiritual Physician, but to those who are *sick* of their Duty; who come to it with Ten thousand foreign and improper Ideas; with the Images of an Estate, a Purchace, a Family, a Trade, a Ball, a Consort of Musick, or perhaps, last Night's Debauch about them:

To these one would prescribe some preparatory Physick, some sequestring of the Mind from these ingaging Objects, before they enter upon Conversing with God, and Corresponding with Heaven; lest the Thoughts that possess'd them this Hour or this Day, keep their haunt the next, and marr the Performance. We are not wont to rush into the Presence of a Prince without premeditation, and some previous Care of our Meen and Deportment: And how comes it then to pass, that we dare presume to Address the Living God so familiarly and so rudely? * *Before thou Prayest*, says the wise Son of *Syrach*, *prepare thy self, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord*, *i. e.* I conceive, to be angry with thee, and to Curse rather than to Bless thee.

* *Ecclesiasticus* 18. 23.

'Twas

'Twas one of the *good things* found in *Jehoshaphat*, * *that he had prepared his Heart to seek God:* And no Man pretends to good Musick, before he has put his Instrument in Tune: When *our Hearts are fixed*, O God, when *our Hearts are fixed*, then shall we best *sing and give Praise*. Now by Preparation here, I do not mean those succinct Applications we are wont to make to God upon our entering on his Service in Houses set apart to that purpose; but the revolving in our Minds such Previous Reflections as these.

I. THE Weight and Importance of the Duty we are about, which is the only proper Conveyancer of the Divine Blessings, and that by Divine Appointment; and is of no less Consequence to us,

* 2 *Chron.* 19. 3.

than the Supply of our Wants both Spiritual and Temporal; the Promiſes of this Life, and of that which is to come: 'Tis, in a Word, a Tranſaction whereon depends the Concern of Life and Death, and what is more, of Eternal Life, and Eternal Death: And will a Man ſlubber over ſuch a Buſineſs as this, will he Plead his Cauſe ſo ſupinely, as if he were Bribed againſt himſelf, when ſo vaſt an Eſtate as the Everlaſting Inheritance depends upon the Iſſue of the Tryal? *Moſes* exhorts the *Jews* to hearken unto the Words of the Law; becauſe, ſays he, * *it is your Life.* Prayers and Praiſes are the *Spiritual Life* of a Chriſtian, and therefore when any foreign Thoughts aſſail it, either by force or fraud; we muſt take up *Nehemiah*'s Anſwer to his

* *Deut.* 32. 40.

Ene-

Enemies, * *I am doing a great Work, ſo that I cannot come down, why ſhould the work ceaſe whilſt I leave it and come down to you?*

II. A PREPARATORY will be beſt placed upon the dread Majeſty of him we addreſs to, and his more immediate Preſence in Places ſet apart for his Service; for God himſelf alledges the greatneſs of his Majeſty, to caution Men againſt offering him any mean and contemptible Sacrifices: † *Curſed be the Deceiver*, ſays he, *which hath in his flock a Male, and Voweth and Sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: For I am a Great King, ſays the Lord of Hoſts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen.* And the wiſe Man urgeth the diſtance betwixt the Great Creator and his Creatures,

* *Nehem.* 6. 3. † *Malac.* 1. 14.

as

as an Argument of that Sobriety and Exactneſs of Utterance and Affection that becomes his Preſence: *Be not raſh with thy Mouth*, ſays he, *and let not thine Heart be haſty to utter any thing before God: For God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth.*

AY, 'tis certainly the want of a due Conſideration of the terrible Name of the Great and Living God, who is infinitely exalted above our moſt elevated Conceptions of him; that makes us ſo often preſent him with the Sacrifice of Fools, that *Excors Sacrificium*, which the Heathen World look'd upon as ſo Prodigious a thing. It requires indeed, a Genius, wide, and Philoſophical, the Portion of but a few, to take in a full draught of Contemplation of the Great and Inviſible Being; and tho' it muſt be own'd, that the moſt refined Capacity cannot now be-

behold him as he is, ſhining in his full Orb of Glory; (for the Contemplation of his Eſſence is an Abyſs, which immediately devours and ſwallows up a dark and broken Underſtanding; it being a ſort of endeavour to look God in the Face, which no Man can do and Live) yet he has not left us without Witneſſes of his Majeſty, in the convulſion of the Mountain, and the agony of Nature at the Promulgation of the Law; in the lofty, but yet infinitely inadequate Deſcriptions that the Prophets give of him; in his Works, of *ſpreading out the Heavens, and treading upon the Waves of the Sea*, &c. In thoſe frightful and amazing Accounts the Scriptures give us, of the Tranſactions of the laſt Day, &c. And certainly did we but endeavour to poſſeſs our Souls with tolerable Conceptions, of this Great and Dread-

ful

ful Being, from these imperfect Notices we have of him; we could not but be induced to take some tolerable care, how, and what we say, when we are speaking unto God: For the Angels themselves the Ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before him, do not more truly minister in his Presence, than we do in our Addresses to him. And Oh! that we had but a glimps of him that is Invisible, that the God of Heaven would but irradiate our dark Capacity, with some Beam of his Majesty: With what Reverence, what Fear and Trembling, should we come before him! And this more especially in Places Consecrated and set apart for the Payment of our Homage to him, where he vouchsafes his more immediate and more special Presence. Not indeed after any gross and local manner, as the Gentiles conceiv'd

ceiv'd of their fictitious Deities in their Temples; in which Sense it is said of the *most High*, that * *he dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*: But by the Retinue of his Angels, which give their more immediate Attendance there, as in their Master's House, by his Word and Sacraments, and by his peculiar readiness to Hear, and Bless those that Devoutly call upon his Name there; for which Reason, as one well observes, the Tabernacle of the Lord was call'd אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד *the Tabernacle of Meeting*; not of Men's meeting together, as is commonly suppos'd, when we Translate it, † *Tabernacle of the Congregation*; but of God's meeting there with Men, his poor humble Supplicants: For so he himself gives the Reason of the Name: *And thou shalt lay them*

* *Acts* 7. † *Exod.* 20. 24. ‖ *Numb.* 17. 4.

up,

up, says God to *Moses*, speaking of the Rods of the Tribes, * *in the Tabernacle of the Congregation, before the Testimony; where I will meet with you. And there I will meet with thee, and commune with thee.* And what else can be the true and unstrained meaning of that Passage of our Saviour in the Gospel, where he Promises, That where *two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is there in the midst of them?* For whatever may be particularly affirm'd of the Temple, *a greater than Solomon is here:* † *Even God wonderful in his holy Places:* Sure these are no other than the Houses of God, these are the Gates of Heaven.

AND therefore we would do well to take care how we make *I-*

* *Exod.* 25. 22. † *Psal.* 85. 35.

niquity

niquity, even the Solemn Meeting; by affronting God with our Lip-Services, and that so *immediately to his Face*: For can any Man in his wits but think, that the great God, to whom the profoundest Homage of the Soul is due; is much more affronted than he is honoured, by the dull spiritless muttering a few *Pater Nosters*, or any other Prayers; by the bare telling over, as the manner of some is, and stringing up their Petitions? We durst not thus mock our Prince to his Face, we would hardly do it to our Equals: And whence then is it, but through want of preparing our Hearts with due Conceptions of his Awful and Majestick Presence in his own House, that we make thus bold with our Maker?

3. IT might be a proper preparatory Reflection, to consider the Fruits

Fruits and Consequences of approaching God in so careless and so incogitant a Manner. I shall not go about to shew at large, how severe God has formerly been upon all Disorders and Irregularities committed about holy Things and Duties; as in the Case of [a] *Aaron's* Sons; of [b] *Uzzah*; of the [c] *Bethshemites*; and of the Church of [d] *Corinth*; nor how he threatn'd that for this very thing, because his People [e] *drew near to him with their Lips, but had removed their Heart far from him, he would therefore proceed to do a marvellous Work among them, even a marvellous Work and a Wonder*: Which was no less than to *confound the Wisdom of the Wise, and the Understanding of the prudent*

[a] *Lev.* 10. 2. [b] 2 *Sam.* 6. 6. [c] 1 *Sam.* 6. 19. [d] 1 *Cor.* 11. 30. [e] *Isa.* 29. 13, 14.

Men

Men amongſt them: I ſhall not, I ſay, inſiſt on theſe Conſiderations now; becauſe it has ſeem'd good to the infinite Wiſdom, to alter the nature of his Inflictions, and for neglects of this kind eſpecially to change them from Temporal into Spiritual; which, tho' they do not ſo immediately affect the Body as the others did, yet endanger the Soul, and take away the Spiritual Life of a Chriſtian. For tho', he do's not now ſmite Men with Death, for their unſanctified Approaches to him; yet he ſmites them with *Deadneſs*, with Coldneſs and Indifferency in the cauſe of Religion, ſuffers them to grow liſtleſs, reaſty, and aukward at their Devotions, and ten to one to lapſe at long run into open Atheiſm and Prophaneneſs. For we certainly loſe ground by every ſpiritleſs Prayer we advance, grow from

bad

bad to worſe, from worſe to ſtark nought, and *paſt feeling*. For every ſuch formal performance grieves the Spirit, cloggs the Conſcience, hardens the Heart, and gives the Devil an occaſion to draw us off from our Neutrality, and to make us at laſt declare for his Party: Whence it is not improbable, that, when we have once contracted ſuch a vicious habit and *Craſis* of Soul in Devotion; he himſelf many times ſends us to our Prayers, that he may add to our Diſeaſe, and turn the beſt Antidote we have againſt him into ſo much ſtronger Poiſon to our ſelves. And therefore we would do well to ſeaſon and prepare our Hearts before hand, with theſe, and the like Conſiderations, that by a juſt Reflection upon the Importance of the Duty, the Supreme Majeſty to whom we pay it, and the fatal Conſequences

of

of a perfunctory Performance of it, we may *attend upon the Lord without Distraction.*

III. ANOTHER proper means, to fix our Thoughts in the Service of God, is to *Love* him with all our Hearts, with all the Powers and Capacities of our Souls: Did we *Delight* to have our Converſation with Him, our Hearts would keep our Minds cloſe to their Work, and not ſuffer them to loiter or to ramble; for our Affections have an immediate Influence upon our Thoughts, and our Hearts generally ſet our Mind the Theme of its Contemplations. Love particularly is a commanding and Imperial Paſſion, that bids us go, and we go; come, and we come; do this, and we do it; a Paſſion that ingroſſes all our Powers, binds us faſt to, and runs our Thoughts,

Thoughts ſo deep into its Object, that we have neither Leiſure, nor Patience, hardly Power, to attend to any others. *O how I love thy Law!* ſays holy *David*, and then it follows, both in him, and in the nature of the thing, * *it is my Meditation all the Day:* And the firſt part of his Character of a good Man is, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and the ſecond is the natural Reſult of the firſt, that † *in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night.* For a Man cannot but pore and muſe on the thing he delights in: And therefore were our Hearts raviſhed with the Love of God, from juſt and retired Reflections upon the benefits of Creation, Preſervation, Redemption, and the Glory that hereafter ſhall be Revealed; did we but kindle

* *Pſal.* 119. 97. † *Pſal.* 1. 2.

this

this holy Flame in us by frequent Conſiderations of his Patience, Forgiveneſs, Forbearance, the Abyſs of his Love, and the great depths of his infinite Beneficence; things that muſt needs render the Deity amiable and lovely to us in our Conceptions of him: All our Motions would tend Heaven-wards, when once invigorated with Impreſſions from that Cœleſtial Fire. We ſhould not be at leiſure to admit any Rival of God in our Thoughts, and to attend to thoſe little idle Toys and Fancies, that have the impudence to ſtep into our Cloſets, and diſtract us.

IV. MEDITATION is another proper Remedy of the wandering of our Thoughts in Prayer. The Hill of Meditation is indeed of difficult but yet of noble Aſcent, that lifts us up ſo far above our natural Level;

Level; that we look down upon the World, and all its Enjoyments, which so frequently interrupt our Devotions, as a very little Thing. 'Tis an Heroick and abstracted Operation of the Soul, that lets us into the very secrets of the Object we Contemplate; that makes every Day fresh Discoveries, and gives us both deep and diffused Prospects of things otherwise invisible: The Telescope of the Mind, whereby we descry new Worlds, *a new Heaven and a new Earth*, the *Terra incognita* of Nature and Grace; and see things at immense distance from us: It opens to us the Scene of Paradise it self, makes a sort of indistance betwixt God and our own Souls, takes us out, or least, makes us forget that we are Flesh, fills our Head with those elevated Conceptions, and warms our Heart with those Ravishments of Joy that we

can feel indeed, but cannot utter or expreſs them. And he who has never yet been experimentally ſenſible of this Truth, never yet rightly enjoy'd either God, or himſelf, has the moſt exquiſite Pleaſure of this Life yet to come, and wants the preparatory Fore-taſte of the Enjoyments of the other. Meditation, in a word, I mean where God is the Object, both quickens and fixes our Devotion, which embraces not its Object but in proportion as Meditation, gives it Entrance

V. AND Laſtly Solitude gives a mighty fixation of Thought, in private, and Religious Aſſemblies in publick Devotion; for a Retreat naturally tends to Recollection of the Spirit and Communion with God: It helps to center all the Emanations of our Souls upon him, and gives us more pure and perfect Proſ-

 pects;

pects; and therefore, *when thou prayest*, says he, who taught us to pray, *enter into thy Closet*, not only to avoid that vain Pomp and Parade, which the Pharisaick Votaries so much Affected; but no doubt to better the Performance, by withdrawing, as much as may be, from those Impressions of worldly Objects, that are wont so fatally to persecute and distract us. Any thing that requires application of Mind carries the necessity of Retirement along with it: How much more that Performance, to the full discharge whereof the utmost Stretch of our Humane Capacities is inadequate: All which is by no means to be understood in prejudice to the Publick Prayers of Religious Assemblies; where the regular Gravity and Decorum of the Worship, the united Zeal and Devotion of the Worshippers, the Sacredness of the Word

that

that is read, the Importance of the Duty, the Dreadfulness of the Place, *&c.* all conspire to wing the Devout Soul with Divine Elevations, to fix it upon God, and give it a Solitude in the great *Congregation.*

AND thus much for those Remedies that may be proper to cure the Distraction and Flatness of our Thoughts in God's Service.

Sect. 3.

WE are now arrived at the last division of our Subject, which is to direct to such Means, as may be proper for the government of our Thoughts in general, *i. e.* on whatsoever Subject they are exercised.

AND here not to insist upon that

Catholicon of Prayer we have already mentioned, that which being a Soveraign and Universal Remedy against all the Evils we labour under, must consequently be of excellent Use against the Exorbitancies of our Thoughts; I would advise, in the

I. PLACE, to open the Scene of the Day with good and savoury Thoughts in the Morning: To make the strength and first born of our Conceptions every Day holy to the Lord; *when I awake* says holy *David*, *I am present with thee*; God ever took place in his Thoughts, and was the earliest Theme of his Meditations. For *in the Morning* says he in another place, *I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up*: We must like him, if we would, with him, learn to hate vain Thoughts; consecrate our most sprightly and sparkling Meditations to him, who

giveth

giveth his beloved ſleep, and yet himſelf *nether ſlumbers nor ſleeps*. For there is no doubt to be made, but that a Mind well ſeaſoned and tinctured with good Thoughts in the Morning, will, with ordinary care, retain its Smack and Fragrancy all the Day; but if we let the world or the Devel in firſt, 'tis great odds but they keep poſſeſſion all the Day, come home too, and go to Bed with us in the Evening.

II. SINCE ſo much of the vanity of our Thoughts is owing to the Imagination, as we have ſeen before at large; it will be highly proper to reſtrain that extravagant Power within its due bounds, to confine it home, and not ſuffer it to run out, ramble and gad ſo far abroad amongſt variety of Objects, that we cannot at our pleaſure call it back again; to take care however

that it make not false Reports of Things, and impose upon our Reason with fictitious and Romantick exaggerations of them, to draw out our Thoughts in the dance after it: But that we learn judiciously to distinguish betwixt the intrinsick value of things, and the extravagant Representations of a lying Imagination.

III. SINCE our Minds receive the Ideas and Images of most Things originally from our Senses; since it is by these avenues that outward Objects make their way to our Hearts; our Ears being, as it were the Gates by which the Objects from without desire to speak with our Thoughts, and our Eyes as windows to our Minds, through which they gaze upon them: It concerns us to set *Waiters* at these *Cinque Ports* of our Senses, to *seize* upon all con-

contraband Goods and ſearch all Comers: As the Governour of a Fortreſs will take care to guard its Avenues, and examine Paſſengers, eſpecially ſtrange Faces; leſt it be inſenſibly betrayed, or ſurpriſed into the Hands of an Enemy, under the appearance and vizor of a Friend: Not that the Senſes are of themſelves any way criminal; for they diſcharge but their reſpective Offices, according to the Laws of their Creation: Nor that all or moſt of the Images of Things, they let in, are noxious and ſinful (for what harm had the Wedge of Gold, or Babyloniſh Garment in them, when *Achan* look'd upon them, coveted, and took them; and is not the fair Face drawn, and melodious Voice tuned by the Finger of God, who can do no Evil?) But they become an occaſion of Sin by the doting of the Heart upon

them; and therefore it is we, muſt guard our Senſes, to deprive that of the matter of its Crimes, and let its fooliſh Fire go out for want of Fuel fit to keep it in. And yet how contrary to this is the Practice of the World, where our Eyes are every Day expos'd to the infection of wanton Pictures, light Dreſſes, Natural and Artificial Beauties; to the redneſs of the Wine when it gives its colour in the Glaſs, and to a Thouſand criminal Examples; and our Ears ſtand all the Day open to Amorous Romantick Stories, obſcene Jeſts, Back-bitings, and Revilings, and moſt times to flat and Inſipid Diſcourſes, that neither miniſter Morality, nor Grace, nor Reaſon to the Hearers. So that our Souls return home at Night infected with the vain Air of the courſes of the Day, and full charged with Toys and Ten thouſand

Amuſe-

Amuſements, which leave ſuch ſenſible Impreſſions behind them; that we are ſtill hankering after thoſe Objects, that gave us ſo agreeable a Diverſion: Our Minds become unwilling Inhabitants of their Tenements of Clay, and little better perhaps, than Captives taken by Satan at his Will. The *Tree was pleaſant to the Eye*, and then the poor Woman inveigled by her Senſe, could not forbear to take and Eat of the Fruit: So that we had need go and learn what that means; *Touch not*, *Taſte not*, *Handle not*; had need not gaze on a Maid, in the advice of the wiſe Son of *Syrach*; *leſt we fall by thoſe things that are precious in her*, and our *Eyes* be *full of Adultery*; had need, in this Senſe too, *take heed how we hear*, and *turn in* (in *Solomon*'s advice) **from*

* *Prov.* 14. 7.

the presence of a foolish Man, when we perceive not in him the lips of Knowledge, or wise and profitable Discourse. Had the Royal *David*, with *Job, made a Covenant with his Eyes*, both he and *Bathsheba* had preserv'd their Innocence, and *Uriah* his Life: But, Alas! the King kept no Life-guard there, (as I may properly call it) where it seems it was most needfull, and so the *Man after God's Heart*, suffer'd his own to walk, in *Job*'s Expression, *after his Eyes, his steps turn'd out of the Way, and he was deceived by a Woman.* And therefore if we would take one primary Step towards the Government and good Discipline of our Thoughts; we must, as far as we are able, amidst that variety of Objects that perpetually surround us, turn away our Eyes from beholding Vanity, and our Ears from hearkening unto Folly; must shut

ſhut the Gates againſt the Enemies of our Peace, and not enter into parley with them; leſt they beck and ſmile upon our Thoughts, give them good Words, call them out, and they, and our Affections, that are conſequent upon them, Tempt us to yield and ſurrender our Innocence.

IV. THEREFORE, in conſequence of this, it will be neceſſary to make a right choice of the Company we keep; which has many times, ſo unreaſonable an Awe over the Modeſty of Humane Nature in its propenſions towards Good; that like St. *Paul's* Perſon, in the *7th.* to the *Romans*, by reaſon of it, *the good that we would, we do not.* For 'tis a hardy well reſolved Piety, that ventures to exert in bad Converſation; *but the evil which we would not, that we do:*

For

For the Biaſs of our own propenſions Naturally inclines us to follow criminal before good Examples. And therefore if we would effectually preſerve our Innocence, we muſt not only let no prophane or lewd Converſation proceed out of our own Mouths; but muſt be deaf to all that's vented by others. For, believe me, there's a ſtrange malignity in bad Converſe, to poyſon and infect even the beſt Diſpoſitions: A ſort of *Effluvia*, as a Learned Perſon of our own ſpeaks, from the Spirits of Men as well as from their Bodies; *with the Clean thou ſhalt be Clean, and with the Froward thou ſhalt learn Frowardneſs.* For Lewdneſs has but a ſhort and eaſie Paſſage from the Ear to the Heart. And therefore what King *Solomon* adviſes in relation to the angry and furious Man, that we

* *make*

* *make no friendſhip with him, leſt we learn his ways, and get a ſnare to our Soul*, is equally applicable to any other inſtance of bad Acquaintance: For *he that touches Pitch ſhall be defiled therewith*, ſays the Son of *Syrach*. And *can a Man*, ſays the wiſe King, *take fire in his Boſom, and his Cloaths not be burnt, can he go upon hot Coals, and his Feet not be burnt?* Will evil Communication let your Manners go as good as it found them? Or, is it not rather verified by the Experience of every ordinary Obſerver of himſelf, That when we meet with an agreeable, howſoever dangerous or deſtructive Converſation; we carry it home along with us, ſuck it in, and our Thoughts chew the Cud ſo long upon it, many times in our moſt private Retirements; that we

* *Prov.* 22. 23, 24.

aſſimilate

assimilate the vicious nutriment into a Part, as it were, of our very Composition. And therefore the best way to secure our Thoughts from Infection, is, to practise with the Adder, to shut our Ears against the Voice of such Charmers, charm they never so agreeably to our own corrupt Inclinations. * *To accept no Person against our own Soul, and not let the Reverence of any Man cause us to fall,* but to exchange the Communion of Devils for that of Saints; whose Examples and salutary Discourses may season our Minds, and, as Iron sharpens Iron, rub off the rust we have contracted, and give an edge to our Spirits.

V. AND as Men should be thus choice in their Company, in order to the preservation of their

* *Eccluſ.* 4. 22.

Thoughts;

Thoughts; ſo likewiſe the ſame care would be had of thoſe Books, upon which they now and then imploy their vacant Hours. It will not be a vanity to affirm, That no Nation in the World exceeds our own for variety of good Books, Publiſh'd in our own Language, and adapted to all Capacities: And yet, ſo far of late Years have we ſuckt in the *French* Air; that, as ſome have labour'd the Introduction of their Government amongſt us, tho' the moſt uneaſie and Tyrannical in Chriſtendom; ſo others have as greedily imitated them in their Vices, and made their Vanities Claſſical and Authentick: I mean particularly, their Plays, Operas, Farces, Romances, and other ſuch like curious Cobweb-Work of idle Brains; in ſo much that a Man may ſay on this Occaſion, with King *Solomon*, *The Heart*

of

of him that hath Understanding seeketh Knowledge, but the Mouth of Fools feeds on Fooliſhneſs. Such Fools amuſe and pleaſe themſelves with the remembrance of idle and fictitious Stories, with the Amours of one Romantick Hero, and the brave imaginary Exploits of another: And thus the Head is fill'd with Froth inſtead of Brains, and the Thoughts, *Camelion*-like, live on the Air, on *that indeed which is not*; as having no other Being but what a fruitful Invention, and a roving Fancy gives it. I ſay then, that for the better ordering Mens Thoughts, it will be requiſite that they lay out their vacant Hours to better purpoſe; particularly on thoſe infallible Records of Eternal Wiſdom that are able to *make them wiſe unto Salvation*, and endeavour to fraight their Heads with Piety and Senſe, inſtead of Fumes and Feathers.

For:

For what Men Read, if it fall in with their own fooliſh and corrupt inclinations, leaves laſting Impreſſions behind it; and generally, the worſt thing that paſſes in Converſation, either with the Living or the Dead; ſticks the longeſt by us, and affords moſt Food for the Thoughts to feed upon: And 'tis well, after all, if ſuch Perſons proceed yet no farther, and turn not the well told legendary Tales that they Read, into true and real Hiſtory by their Practice.

VI. THEN ſince the vanity of Thoughts is ſo much owing to the ill Supplies they meet with, partly from idle Books, partly from as idle Converſation; it will be further requiſite to furniſh the Mind with good Materials, for it to exert and deſcant on. Since the crudities of the Soul, like thoſe of the Stomack,

pro-

proceed ſo much from thoſe ill Juices which have vitiated its tone and digeſtion; we muſt provide it better Food and more wholſom Diet to recover its taſte, its due *Craſis*, and conſtitution; for the Soul as well as the Body is apt to participate of the Nature of that which affords it its uſual Nouriſhment. And, here we have as large a Table ſpread for our Mental Repaſt, as the wonders contain'd in God, in Nature and in Grace can furniſh. View the firſt of theſe in his Almighty Power, whereby, as he ſpake the World out of Nothing; ſo he can, not only think, but return it into Nothing again: In his Immenſity, whereby he fills all Places, and is contained of None: In the Unity and Simplicity of his Nature, a Whole without Parts: In his Underſtanding, to which the Truth of all Things before they had a Being, was as broad Noon-day to him,

or

or rather he to them; their Essences being all displayed in, and derived from his own: In his will, the immediate Efflux or first born of his Understanding, and yet co-evous with its Parent: View him in the Justice of his Judgments, in the Wisdom of his Providence, and in his Goodness towards the Children of Men. * *Whoso is wise will consider these things, and they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord:* Or look over, in the next place, the Book of Nature, the *Heavens the work of his Fingers,* † *the Moon and the Stars which he hath ordained:* Those Immense *Fire-Works,* whose motion is as regular as rapid, and are but as the Twilight of the everlasting Day, and of that Light which is inaccessible: Read him further yet in the amazing Instance of his Grace,

* *Psal.* 107. 13. † *Psal.* 8. 3.

when

when *he reconciled the World to himself in Christ:* Let the *Mystery of Godliness* be ever present to thy Mind; ‖ *God manifest in the Flesh justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.* But it cannot be imagin'd that I should enter into the detail of those innumerous Objects that afford proper Matter for the Contemplation and Improvement of our Thoughts; and therefore the succinct Advice of the Apostle will appositely take place here: *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: If there be any Vertue, or if there be any Praise, think on these Things.* For the Truth and

‖ 1 *Tim.* 3. 16.

Reason

Reaſon of all is, The Spirit of a Man is an active reſtleſs Principle of internal Motion, that will not be wholly idle, but will be doing; tho it be nothing to the purpoſe, rather then do juſt nothing at all. And therefore unleſs you furniſh it with good ſtuff to work upon, it will take up with that which is next at hand at all adventures: So that if we would *bring forth good things*, in our Saviour's Language, we muſt, with his *good Man*, have a *good treaſure in our Hearts:* * (*How precious are thy Thoughts to me O God*, ſays holy *David*, *how great is the ſum of them!*) Not a ſmall inconſiderable Stock of Piety and Knowledge, but a Treaſure, a good Fund, or Bank, for our Thoughts to trade with, and then we ſhall increaſe with the Increaſe of God. King *Solomon* requiring us

* *Pſal.* 139. 17.

to

to bind the Divine Law continually upon our Hearts, adds, That when we go *it ſhall lead us*,* *When we ſleep it ſhall keep us*, and when we awake it ſhall talk with us. *i.e.* It will entertain our Thoughts, and bear them Company, when we are alone: Or, as it's ſaid upon the ſame Occaſion, † *When we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we riſe up*: Times generally of the greateſt Retirement. But now without this good Society at Home, our Thoughts will certainly ſeek out for new Acquaintance; gad abroad for fellowſhip with ſome other Objects; and ten to one in their jant, fall into bad Company: Aſſociate with the *Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*; and get thoſe ill haunts that our Minds perhaps may never after have the power to abandon.

* *Prov.* 6. 22. † *Deut.* 6. 7.

BUT

BUT becauſe neither Nature nor Education has furniſh'd all Men with equal Matter for their Thoughts, and there are different ſizes in Underſtanding as well as in Stature; therefore,

VII. ONE would adviſe to a more comprehenſive Expedient for the Government of Thoughts which every one is capable of uſing: And that is, for Men to be Diligent and Induſtrious in that Calling or Station wherein Providence has plac'd them; to do, as the wiſe King adviſes, *with all their might what their hands find to do.* For this confines the Stream of our Thoughts to their proper Channel, and hinders them from overflowing their Bank: This hedges in the Ramblers, and keeps them to their own Incloſure, who, if left unconfined,

fined, would, like *Jeremy*'s wild *Ass ſnuff up the Wind*, and obſerve no meaſures. God, who is the Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh, knew that he had made them active, reſtleſs things: And therefore to imploy and find them Work, to keep them doing as they ought, when they are not immediately ingaged in his Service; he Deſign'd Men their reſpective Callings and Profeſſions, and Six parts of Time in Seven for them to take up their Thoughts and imploy them: And if they are not thus ingaged about their own Buſineſs, 'tis odds, but that like St. *Paul*'s *buſie Bodies, they wander from Houſe to Houſe*, mind other Mens, and *meddle with many Matters*. Which may in time cauſe as great Combuſtions without, as they do diſorder the Head within. Let our Thoughts then keep within their own Lines, and make no in-

croach-

croachments, *hitherto*, within the circle of our own proper Buſineſs and Station, let their *proud Waves go, and no farther*. Let his Thoughts who is Appointed *to the Miniſtery wait on his Miniſtring*, his, who is to *Teach*, *on Teaching*, &c.

VIII. IT were adviſable for Mens better ordering their Thoughts, to make choice, as far as they can, of ſuch Imployments and Courſe of Life, as is moſt ſuitable to their Genius, and abilities of Mind; for that always ſits the eaſieſt on them, and their Thoughts more Naturally fall in with their Buſineſs and abide by it: Whereas if Mens Imploys lie croſs the grain of their Inclinations, their Thoughts will be perpetually running after ſomething elſe, at which they are not ſo aukward: Or if they aſpire at Things to which their ſtrength

bears no proportion, *matters too high for them*, and above the ſphere of their Activity; the weight of the burden will render them painful and uneaſie, make them *ſtagger too and fro like a drunken Man, and bring them to their wits end*; beſides the damage they may occaſion to the Publick: As *Phaeton* endeavouring to mount his Father's Chariot, the management whereof he did not underſtand; was thereby thrown out of Heaven, and had like to have ſet the World on fire.

IX. NEXT to this it may be proper to ſubjoin the advice of endeavouring to contract rather than enlarge our Secular Affairs; inſtead of ſpreading them wider, to reduce them to as tight and narrow a compaſs as we can, that we may the beter attend to the improvement of our own Minds; an Ac-

Acquisition infinitely beyond the most pompous Temporal Attainment. For what are Honours, Riches, Pleasures, all the World, to a brave refined and accomplished Mind? Now multiplicity of Business is a mighty obstruction to this Mental Improvement. He that thinks of many things, thinks of nothing; as he that would go several ways stands still: It distracts and divides our Thoughts, like Water mixt with Wine, debilitates and disutes them. That River will neither be so deep, nor so serviceable for Trade, that is divided into a great many little Channels; as that which flows altogether in its own natural Bed. Thus it is with our Thoughts; if we let them out at every little chink, which the Concerns of the World make in them, they'll be but shallow Thoughts, and marr the Improvement of our

Minds. A Ray collected into a Point is far more intenſe than one variouſly refracted. As God does not love idle, ſo neither over-buſie People: *Martha*'s fault was not that ſhe was imployed in Ill, but in *many* things, which juſtled for that time, the *good part* out of her Mind. Cares intangle and perplex the Thoughts, and too much Worldly Buſineſs limes and clings the Wings of our Mind ſo faſt, that it cannot take its due and natural Flight. Variety of Objects ever weakens and diſtracts the force of our Faculties, which are ſo ſtinted in their Operation, that they cannot with any tolerable vigour direct to more than one Mark at once: And therefore if we would bear a due regard to the trueſt improvement of our Minds, and management of our Thoughts; we muſt narrow our Secular Affairs as much

as

as we can; leſt the *multitude of buſineſs*, which *Solomon* ſays, occaſions *Dreams* in ſleep, make our Thoughts to be little better in the Day-time. And therefore in order to take off our Minds from a too greedy purſuit of Secular Concernments, that we may be thereby the better inabled to attend upon God and our own Souls without diſtraction; let us

X. IN the next place, frequently ſet before us the Vanity of the World, and the emptineſs of all its Enjoyments. Remembring that that was the reſult of *Solomon*'s vaſt Experience in this Kind. *Vanity* was the Motto he inſcrib'd on all Things *under the Sun*: For even *when he gave his heart to know Wiſdom, and to know Madneſs and Folly, to ſeek and to ſearch out by wiſdom concerning all things that are*

done under Heaven; even this also, this noble Imployment of his vast Capacities he pronounces no better than *vexation of Spirit*: For *in much wisdom*, says he, *is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge* (it self) *does but increase his sorrow.* And if this great Master of Experience, and skilful Observer of Things, met with so very little satisfaction, even in the pursuit of Knowledge, and resolves the *conclusion of the whole matter*, as he speaks, into the *fearing of God and keeping his Commandments*; we may safely conclude, That there is nothing here below adequate to the large Soul of Man, worthy to engage his Affections, and ingross his Powers: And if we can but thus wean our Thoughts, from the World and its Allurements; we shall then be at liberty to lay them out elsewhere to better purpose, and to our greater and more lasting satisfaction. NOT

NOT that what I have ſaid on theſe two laſt Heads, is to be underſtood, as if I would have all Men devote themſelves to Contemplation, to quit the World and their ordinary Imployments, and meddle with no Buſineſs; for I preſcribe it;

XI. IN the next Place, as an excellent Remedy againſt evil Thoughts to avoid Idleneſs, which in common Experience ever gives the Devil an advantage againſt us: When *David* coming from lolling on his Bed walk'd idly, it ſhould ſeem, * on the Roof of his Houſe; he immediately preſented *Bathſheba* to his Thoughts, and ſoon prevail'd with him to accept the Proffer. For when we are the idleſt, he is the buſieſt; when we do the

* 2 *Sam.* 11.

leaſt, he does the moſt with us: If our Minds ſleep, he'll ſow his Tares the faſter, and if we let them lie fallow, Weeds will be the Natural Product of the neglected Soil. Standing Minds, like ſtanding Waters, puddle and corrupt, and become the proper Element of Vermin.

XII. AGAIN, it will be our Wiſdom, for the better management of our Thoughts, now and then to review them; to call them together to the muſter, and examine the ſtate and plight of our Minds; to encourage good Motions, and diſcountenance Bad; and to let them know we have ſet a ſpie upon them, and that they come not there without our Obſervation. And becauſe every Man has his blind Side, and the Sin of his Boſom, and conſequently our Thoughts run

run further into some sort of Objects than others; we must take particular care, and after such review shall be better inabled, to guard there most, where our Thoughts ply the most, where their haunts are, and the Company they most delight in; as he who Commands in chief in a Siege will place the strongest Guard there, where the Walls or other Fortifications of the Town are the weakest. So, if you find that Lust, for instance, has stollen in at the Windows of your Eyes, and got the greatest Ascendant over you, watch your Thoughts on that side; for there they'll be sure to hanker: So, again, if you observe your self the weakest on the side of Provocations, and Anger be your Infirmity; take care to have your Reason within call, and take off your Thoughts betimes from Resentments, and meditating

Revenge; for that's the Subject they'll be ſure moſt of all to dwell on, *&c.* And thus by reviewing our Thoughts we ſhall both acquire Power, and learn how to manage them, and be able to Countermine the Devil, who knowing our ſtrong and feeble Part, better many times than we do our ſelves; always lays his Train there where 'tis moſt likely to take fire, and to blow up our Hearts the ſtrong Fort of our Innocence.

XIII. SINCE, as has been before obſerv'd, our Thoughts are generally too much at the command of our Paſſions, ſo that look what ſort of Affections bear the ſway in a Man's Heart, that way his Thoughts will take their courſe; therefore is it highly adviſable, again, to ride this brutal Part of us with a ſtreight Rein, to raiſe and ſpi-

ſpiritualize our *Affections*, by *ſetting them on things above*, and not letting them run ſo madly as they do on *things that are upon the Earth*. For tho' Thoughts give the firſt Being to Affections, as no Man can love or hate a Thing before he thinks on't; yet when they are once plac'd upon their Objects, they make our Thoughts dance after them at their pleaſure. As if Fear has ſeiz'd us, it calls in all our Thoughts to view the frightful Object, diſorders our Powers, and makes the Mind paint the Bug-bear with unjuſt dimenſions, perhaps, and unnatural colours: So, if Deſire carry us abroad amongſt variety of Objects; our Thoughts muſt keep it company, and lie under that infinite perplexity and diſtraction that Naturally attends its Extravagance, and therefore if we would Command our Thoughts,

we

we must first learn to Command our Passions.

XIV. HE that would have the company of good Thoughts, must entertain them kindly, and give them a friendly reception when they come and visit him. If you receive them coldly, and with an Air of indifferency; they'll be as shy to you in time, as you can be to them: For the Divine *Spirit*, the great Author of them, will not always *strive* with Men, but will take Wing, fly away, and desert you; for they are nimble Movers, and are sent upon an Errand that is your own truest Interest, and therefore if you have not yet learnt to be wise to your selves by closing with their Proposals, co-operating with them, and *working out your own Salvation*; they have no Commission to force or drive you on to Happiness, like

an

an Horſe or Mule that have no underſtanding, but will leave you not only where, but worſe than they found you.

XV. SINCE few Men are of that ſtrong and Athletick Temper of Soul, as to be able to bear the ſhocks of Adverſity, but that it generally ruffles and diſcompoſes their Thoughts, and, like the deſperate Puſhes of an Enemy, breaks their Ranks, and puts them in diſorder; it would be therefore of excellent and common uſe for the management of our Thoughts in thoſe Exigencies, to be verſt in the Theory of the Divine Diſpenſations, to bring our ſelves to a Recumbency upon God, and *commit our Cares to him who careth for us*, that we may thereby maintain an evenneſs of Temper amidſt the rougheſt Emergencies; and enjoy a calm of Mind

Mind within, amidſt the loudeſt Storms without.

XVI. AGAIN, ſince, notwithſtanding the Immaterial and Spiritual Nature of the Soul; it is capable of being wrought upon, and affected by the Body during their Union; for when once link'd and wedded together, there ariſes a mutual Sympathy betwixt the unequal Couple; and that thence doubtleſs proceed many fooliſh, wandring, and impure Cogitations; It would be adviſable to tame the one by the macerations of the other, to mortifie the Fleſh, to *keep our Bodies under*, and not cram and indulge them, till the Beaſt rides the Man, till they grow too hard for our Reaſon, throw off its Government, and draw even it in too, to ſecond the Motions and Sollicitations of the Fleſh. For the *Flames* of Luſt *quench*

the

the Spirit, as the ſcorching Sunbeams put out the gentler heat of the Fire. Foul Weather in the lower Regions ſends up nought but filthy Steams and Vapours. *The pure in Heart only ſhall ſee God* here, as well as hereafter; and thence be furniſhed with juſt and elevated Conceptions: For he will not accept * *polluted Bread upon his Altar*: Nor will admit an unclean Sacrifice. If therefore we would be Maſters of our own Thoughts, we muſt firſt be Maſters of our Appetites, and not pamper and indulge our Carkaſſes; but wiſely avoiding all exceſſes of this kind, muſt endeavour, by a Subſtraction of unneceſſary fuel from the Body, to let the Fire thereby kindled in our Thoughts go out.

* *Mal.* 1. 7.

XVII.

XVII. LASTLY, it will highly conduce to the Ordering of our Thoughts aright, to live, as much as possibly we can, under this Apprehension, That Almighty God is present with them, sees, knows, reads and scans their subtlest Motions and darkest Intrigues, better than the Eyes and Ears of Men hear or see them in their fruits of Words and Actions. For lo, there is not a Thought in our Heart, but *he knoweth it altogether, and afar off*; *for I know their Imagination*, says God, concerning his People, * *which they go about even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware:* † *For He, even He only, knows all the Hearts of the Children of Men:* And, as *Job* says, ‖ *no Thought can be with-holden from him: Hell and Destruction are*

* *Deut.* 31. 21. † 1 *King.* 8. 39. ‖ *Job* 42. 2.

before

before him, * *how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men?* For ſhall not the Almighty Artificer, who *made the Heart*, know all the Wheels, the Springs and Movements that are in it? Go then, and *aſcend up into Heaven*, in the Pſalmiſt's Rhetorick on this occaſion, *make thy bed in Hell, take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the Sea:* Go whither, do what thou wilt, there's an Ear to over-hear thee, an Eye to over-look thee, and an invifible Hand to tranſcribe and regiſter the cloſeſt Tranſactions of thy Mind: We find the Royal *David* had ſuch a continual lively Senſe of this matter on him, that he tell us, † *when he awaked God was ever preſent with him*, occurr'd immediately to his Mind; as thoſe Objects generally

* *Prov.* 15. 11. † *Pſal.* 139.

do

do at our wakening, which moſt of all engroſs our Thoughts. And could we but learn to Live under the ſame quick Apprehenſion, would we *walk* leſs by Senſe and more by *Faith*, and look through at thoſe Things that lie *within the Vail*; it would be of mighty uſe to us in the management of this hidden and unſeen Part of us. For ſince our Sins in *Embryo* at their firſt conception in the Soul, are as loathſom in God's Eyes, as they are in their Birth and Production, ſhameful in the Eyes of Men: Since the Remarks of thoſe who are of like Infirmities with our Selves, are powerful enough to perſwade us, to the regulation of our outward Behaviour; and we ſhould really be in confuſion, to have any grave, ſober Friend, whoſe Eſteem we value, and whoſe Judgment we revere, privy to all the fooliſh and

un-

unhallowed Thoughts of our Souls; how much rather ſhould the Conſideration of God's All-ſeeing Eye lay a reſtraint upon our internal Follies? For what Abſurdity is this to be aſhamed of what paſſes in our Thoughts, could Men pry into thoſe Receſſes; and yet to let God look on without the leaſt Emotion? What Inadvertency, or Atheiſm rather is it, to be aſhamed or afraid of an overtact of Wickedneſs, leſt Men ſhould find us out; and yet at the ſame time Riot in our Hearts, and Debauch in our Thoughts, when God all the while ſtands by a Spectator, and if he pleas'd himſelf, a Juſt Avenger, of all ſuch Impious Tranſactions? Since then God certainly knows all that paſſes in our Hearts, ſees and obſerves who comes in, and who goes out, is intimate to every unclean, or otherwiſe ſinful Thought,

to

to every unlawful Desire, to every malicious and revengeful Wish; to whatsoever, in a Word, is transacted in that Cabinet-Council; let us endeavour after such an habituated Thought of God, as may mix him, not in our Actions only, but in all the movements of our Minds: Let the Consideration of his Presence engage us to keep strict Discipline there, to Order, and Govern, and Manage our Thoughts aright; as what are all open and naked in his Sight; for surely the Lord is with them, tho' perhaps we are not aware of it.

I shall shut up the whole with the Excellent Collect of our Church to this purpose.

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto whom all Hearts be open, all Desires known,

known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnifie thy Holy Name, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

FINIS.

ARch-Bp. *Teniſon*'s Conference with *Pulton* the Jeſuit.

——His Nine Sermons upon ſeveral Occaſions.

Bp. *Williams*'s Diſcourſe of the Worſhipping God by the Common-Prayer.

——His Vindication of Arch-Biſhop *Tillotſon* from *Socinianiſm.*

——His Repreſentation of the abſurd and miſchievous Principles of the *Muggletonians.*

——His Sermons at Eſq; *Boyle*'s Lecture.

Bp. *Patrick*'s Hearts Eaſe, or a Remedy againſt all Troubles. The Seventh Edition. 1699.

——His Parable of the Pilgrim.

——His Eleven Sermons upon ſeveral Occaſions.

——His Commentary upon *Geneſis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus* and *Numbers*, in 4 Volumes 4°.

——His Commentary on *Deuteronomy* (in the Preſs.)

Dr. *Wake*'s Eleven Treatiſes againſt Popery. 4°

Bp. *Stillingfleet*'s Diſcourſe of the Unreaſonableneſs of Separation on account of the Oaths.

Bp. *Williams*'s Vindication of the ſaid Diſcourſe.

Bp. *Stillingfleet*'s Vindication of His Majeſty's Authority to fill up the Sees of the Deprived Biſhops.

——His Anſwer to Three Papers (pretended to be Written by King *Charles* II. and found in the Strong Box) concerning the Authority of the Catholick Church in Matters of Faith, and the Reformation of the Church of *England.*

——His Vindication of the ſaid Anſwer.

The Secret Conſults, Negotiations and Intrigues of the Papiſts in *Ireland* from 1660 to 1689.

Dean *Story*'s Impartial Hiſtory of the Wars in *Ireland.* In Two Parts with Sculptures.

Valentines's

Valentines's Private Devotions Digeſted into Six Litanies, *Viz.* Confeſſion, Deprecation, Supplication, Thankſgiving, Interceſſion, and for the Sick: with Directions and Prayers for the Lord's Day, the Sacrament, the Day of Death and Judgment. The 26th Edition

Arch-Bp. *Tillotſon* of Sincerity and Conſtancy in the Faith and Profeſſion of the True Religion. Being the Firſt Vol. Publiſhed from the Originals by Dr. *Barker*, Chaplain to His Grace.

——His Second Vol. Containing 16 Sermons on ſeveral Occaſions.

——His Third Vol. Containing 16 Sermons on ſeveral Subjects.

——His Fourth Vol. Containing Diſcourſes of Natural and Inſtituted Religion, *&c.*

——His Fifth Vol. Proving *Jeſus* to be the *Meſſias*, the Son of God: The Danger of Apoſtaſy, *&c.*

——His Sixth Vol. Being upon the Attributes of God (Part the Firſt)

——His Seventh Vol. Being upon the Reſt of the Divine Attributes. Part II. [*In the Preſs.*]

Dr. *Outram*'s Sermons on ſeveral Occaſions.

Mr. *Henry Wharton*'s Sermons in Two Vol. With an Account of his Life.

Dr. *Conant*'s Sermons in Two Vol. Publiſhed by Bp. *Williams.*

Dr. *Cave*'s Primitive Chriſtianity. The Fifth Edition, 1698.

SCRIPTORUM ECCLESIASTIORUM *Hiſtoria Literaria facili & perſpicua methodo digeſta.* Pars Altera. *Qua pluſquam DC. Scriptores novi, tam Editi quam Manuſcripti recenſentur; Prioribus plurima adduntur; breviter aut obſcure dicta illuſtratur; recte aſſerta vindicantur. Accedit ad finem cujuſvis Sæculi* CONCILORUM *omnium tum Genera-*

Generalium tum Particularium Historica Notitia. Ad Calcem vero Operis Dissertationes tres, (1) *De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis incerta ætatis.* (2) *De Libris & Officiis Ecclesiasticis Græcorum.* (3) *De Eusebii Cæsariensis Arianismo adversus Joannem Clericum. Adjecti sunt Indices utilissimi Scriptorum Alphabetico-Chronologici. Studio & labore* Gulielmi Cave, *S. T. P. Canon. Windesorienſis.* Folio.

Dr. *Wake* Of Preparation for Death.

A New Account of *India* and *Persia*; being Nine Years Travel, began 1672. and finished 1681. Containing Observations made of those Countries: Namely, Of their Government, Religion, Laws, Customs: Of their Soil, Climates, Seasons, Health, Diseases. Of their Animals, Vegitables, Minerals, Jewels. Of their Housing, Cloathing, Manufactures, Trades, Commodities. And of the Coins, Weights and Measures used in the Principal Places of Trade in those Parts. By *John Fryer* M. D. *Cantabrig.* and Fellow of the Royal Society. *Folio.* 1698.

The Life of *Henry Chichele*, Arch-Bp. of *Canterbury*. In which there is a Particular Relation of many Remarkable Passages in the Reigns of *Henry* the V. and VI. Kings of *England*. Written in *Latin* by *Arthur Duck*, LL.D. Chancellor of the Diocess of *London:* And Advocate of the Court of Honour. Now made *English*. And a Table of Contents annexed.

The Judgment of the Ancient *Jewish* Church, against the *Unitarians*, in the Controversy upon the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour. With a Table of Matters, and a Table of Texts of Scripture occasionally Explain'd. By a Divine of the Ch. of *Eng.* 1699.

Short Memorials of *Thomas* Lord *Fairfax*. Written by Himself.